



03// Spring 2021

Mouth of The River
Publication of Oyster River High School

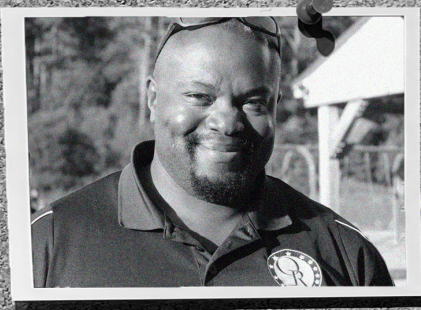






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Dear Reader,

We are happy to share our third issue of Mouth of the River. We hope you have as much fun reading this as we had creating it. Whether you're enjoying this issue from our first in-person coffee house in over a year, or from the comfort of your own home, we are confident you will love it.

Three issues in, the entire staff has continued to set the bar high and have produced meaningful stories for the Oyster River community. This issue is centered around a variety of profiles from Oyster River community members. These individuals all have a unique role in this community and deserve to be recognized. Our cover, which highlights these people, was created by Liam Ashburner, with help from the staff's creative team.

If profiles aren't your style, there are a variety of other stories in this issue we are certain you will enjoy, ranging from Emily Hamilton and Sadie Hackenburg's review on the best french fries in the area, to "Commodification of Mental Illness," by Ella Gianino.

A huge thank you goes out to all of the businesses who have generously sponsored our publication this issue. All sponsors can be found in the back of this magazine, and on our website under a dedicated sponsors tab. If you are interested in sponsoring Mouth of the River for the coming issues, or in subscribing to the publication, contact Ethan Wilson at mouthoftherivermagazine@gmail.com.

As always, make sure to check out mor.news for all current and past stories, as well as our Instagram and Facebook pages.

On behalf of the entire staff, thank you for reading, wherever you are, and whoever you are. We hope you love our third issue of Mouth of the River.

Stay tuned,

Emily Hamilton and Holly Reid, Co-Editors in Chief

Mouth of the River Mission Statement

Mouth of the River seeks to reliably inform the student body, as well as the surrounding community, of interesting and newsworthy content in a modern, compelling format. Our goal as a staff is to give voice to the students of Oyster River, and have it heard by all our students. The opinions expressed in Mouth of the River represent those of the writers and staff.

The Faces of MOR

Photos By Liam Ashburner



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Transgender Youth

Oyster River High School boasts of acceptance and diversity amongst their student body. As just one part of the larger community, the transgender students within the school are a niche but equally important part of the student population. Students who identify as transgender have had to navigate not only the normal angst which accompanies everyone's highschool experience, but also the complicated matter of figuring out their own gender identity and expression. In order to accommodate for these students and give them the support they need, the school has created policies and set up support systems tailored to helping transgender students. However these policies can't account for the challenges that many transgender students face at home, outside of school, and internally.

When talking about transgender students it is important to know what it means to be transgender. Transgender is an umbrella term, which, according to the Planned Parenthood website, refers to people whose, "gender identities can be different from the sex they were assigned at birth." As an umbrella term, transgender can be used to encompass a lot of different identities. Including both binary, trans men and women, and

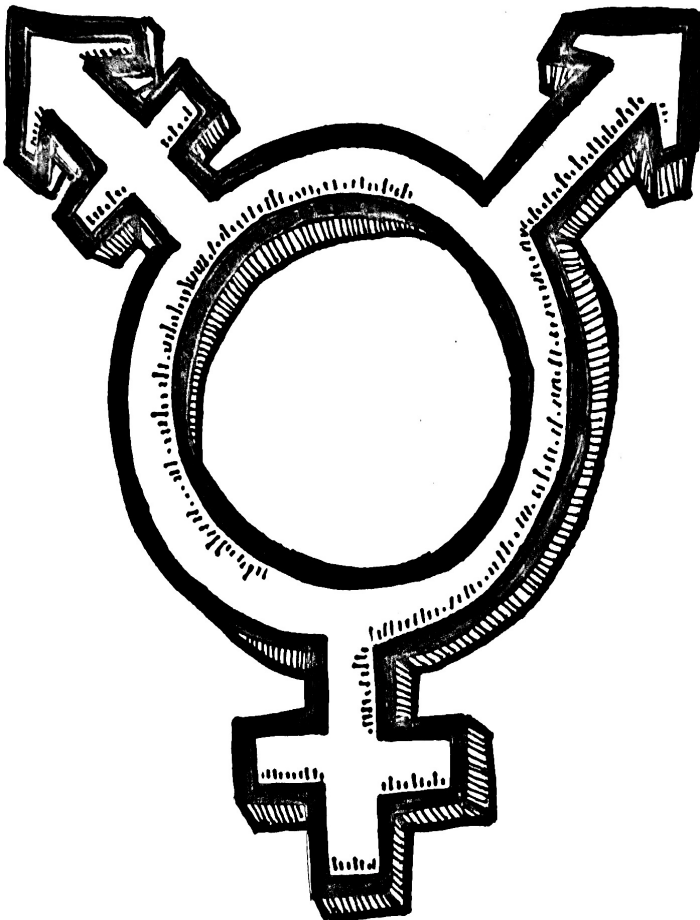


non-binary, those who don't identify with either the male or female gender, individuals who identify as trans. There are even more ways of identifying within the trans community since each person's experience is unique to them but this article will focus primarily on binary and non binary members of Oyster River's trans community.

Seth Heirtzler ('22) is a transgender male student. He first came out in seventh grade and has since legally changed his name, started testosterone, and received top-surgery. "I didn't really want to acknowledge it so I first. I came out in multiple stages, so first I came out as a lesbian and then I came out as nonbinary with a preference to he/him but then I just came out as trans male around Christmas and my gift was a haircut," said Heirtzler. Being transgender comes many legal hoops to jump through, even after one has managed their own personal feelings about their identity. Currently Heirtzler is working on getting the gender marker on his driver's license changed, but since it is attached to his social security number, and related to his birth gender, it has proven difficult.

This has not been the only challenge for Heirtzler along the way. Before starting testosterone, he had to get diagnosed with gender dysphoria, a psychological diagnosis that details when someone's birth gender is different from their gender identity. In order to get his diagnosis, he had to go to therapy for three months. "I went to see a therapist that was trained in gender dysphoria and they gave me the diagnosis. After that, they had to write me a letter of recommendation to my general physician and then I could go to an endocrinologist. I think it took two separate visits. It was 3 hours away," said Heirtzler. While this process ultimately worked for Heirtzler, it was lengthy and, at times, very difficult. "We should have easier ways to transition. It really doesn't need to be a 6-month process for you to get diagnosed with dysphoria," said Heirtzler. "There are a lot of trans people who don't have dysphoria and they would like to take testosterone but they can't because they can't get a diagnosis of dysphoria because they just don't have it so sometimes you have to lie and I feel like that's more disingenuous."

After finally starting testosterone in December of 2016, Heirtzler was able to begin his physical transition. On June 27th of 2019 he was able to get top surgery. After his surgery while being grateful for the physical change before he could truly celebrate it he had to go through the nearly 3 month recovery process.. "Your body is going through so much trauma you're angry at yourself



for putting yourself through all that trouble so you're always second-guessing yourself like was this worth it," said Heirzler.

While Heirzler, with the support of his family, was able to physically transition, not all youth who wish to transition are able to. While some transgender people choose not to alter themselves with surgical procedures or hormones, it is common in order to induce a physical transition. Elliot Orchard-Blowen ('24) is currently unable to transition how he wants. "I'm presenting as my gender and comfortable using my pronouns but physically I am not really allowed to," said Orchard-Blowen.

Though he is not able to physically change his appearance or legally change his name or gender marker, Orchard-Blowen has been able to change his name on his school records, and contacted all of his teachers about his preferred pronouns at the beginning of the year. "All of my teachers have been pretty great," said Orchard-Blowen, "I didn't expect [their response] to be that good and positive.

At Oyster River, administration makes a point of trying to include and support all of their students, but specifically their transgender students. According to the Oyster River's policy, being considered transgender at school means that, "they consistently assert a gender identity or expression different from that traditionally associated with their assigned sex at birth. This involves more than a casual declaration of gender identity or expression, but it does not necessarily require a medical diagnosis." Oyster River was one of the first districts in the area to create and adapt such a policy to their schools.

Jason Baker, one of four counselors at ORHS, helped to create

the policy after one of his students came out as transgender, and he realized a change needed to be made. Baker explained his desire to help the student and, "make this place the most supportive it can be for them." Baker brought up the idea of the policy to then principal Todd Allen and Superintendent James Morse in the winter of 2015. They spoke to lawyers, UNH officials, and school

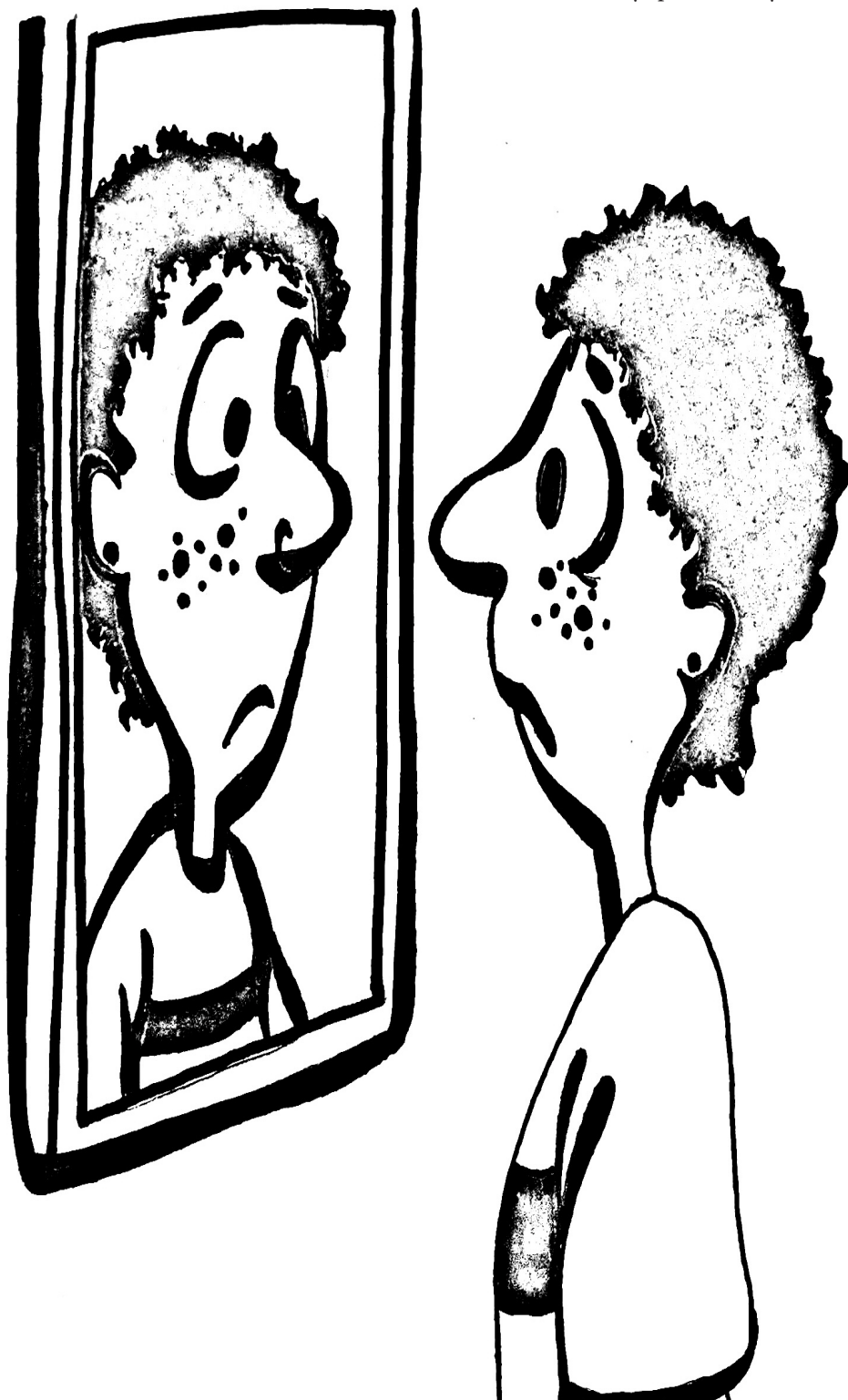
board members about the correct wording and initiative before the policy was adapted by the school board that summer. "We tried to be as precise as we could with flexibility so it can change at any moment to include new phrases, words, or identities," said Baker.

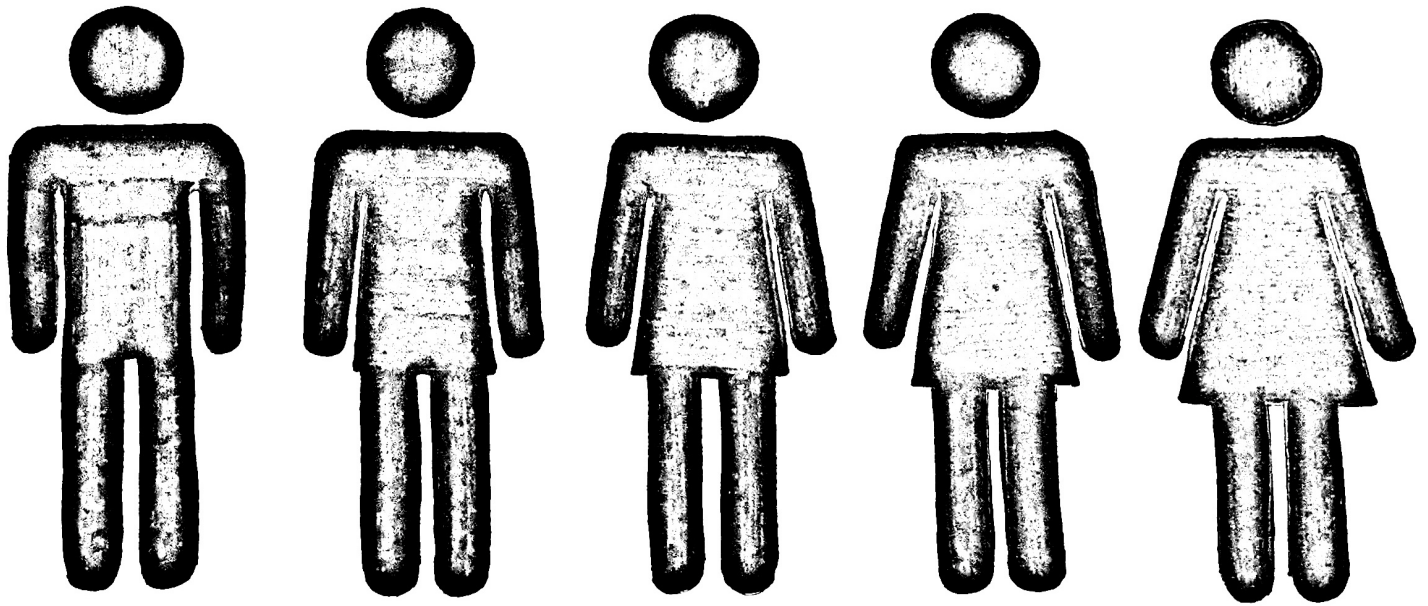
However, supporting transgender students is not always easy. For example, while changing names in Powerschool is "very easy" for administration, other actions are more difficult to do without a parents permission. "Sometimes you're just working confidentially with the student until they are 18 and they can get out of the house," said Baker. Home situations are very hard to change especially when parents aren't willing to accommodate their kids changes but Baker says, "We are here and we are ready, willing, and able to help."

While this is helpful to those who need documents changed and support from counselors, many of the challenges faced by transgender youth within the school can be unintentional but still harmful. One issue many students have faced, intentional or

not, has been the binary curriculum

"There's an element of being non binary within a very binary world where a lot of things which shouldn't be hard can be," said Juno Ball ('23) a non-binary student at Oyster River. They have had a lot of support from their counselor, advisor, and teachers,





“There’s no one way to be trans or to be non binary.”

who have wanted to make them as relaxed as possible. “It was very clear they wanted to make sure I was comfortable with everything, and that everything happened on my terms,” said Ball. Regardless, there have still been instances in which they have been ostrichsized. They have had issues with teachers assigning seats in a boy-girl pattern, which puts them in a seat that seemingly labels them as one gender over the other, “It makes me really uncomfortable,” said Ball.

Ball is not the only student to have experienced this. In health class, Heirzler also noticed that the curriculum is catered primarily to cisgendered straight students. One moment which stood out to him was when the class had to split into boys and girls to learn how to self examine for cancer. Heirzler and another trans student were caught in the middle between their identity and their anatomy.

Teachers are trained to be inclusive of all their students so they make it a point to properly gender their students and take into account their circumstances. The student population is not. Many of the issues transgender kids have not only in school, but everywhere, is deadnaming and misgendering. Deadnaming refers to when someone uses the name a transgender person used to have before they transition, and misgendering refers to when people use someone’s incorrect pronouns.

“There’s something to be said about learning the best ways to cope with being misgendered,” said Heirzler. Heirzler now presents as masculine, and even has a beard, but while he is not often misgendered anymore, he used to be more often. For those who are at the start of their transition being misgendered and deadnamed is sadly not uncommon. Orchard-Blowen has experienced this, as he gets both deadnamed and misgendered often. He has been able to come out with identity comfortably but still struggles with correcting people. “I wish I could tell you I did [correct people] but I don’t have the confidence to do that,” said

Orchard-Blowen. “It’s hard, but I hope that one day I will be able to just do it without thinking.”

While most misgendering and deadnaming is done unintentionally, sometimes it is done on purpose with malicious intent. Ball faced this recently when they had a kid use their deadname and incorrect pronouns because they were “annoyed” with them. “That’s just not how it works,” said Ball, who was upset that people thought it was okay to switch between the two as they pleased.

“As soon as you are misgendered, everything you see in yourself is changed,” said Heirzler. Prior to transitioning, he used to spend hours looking at himself in the mirror and comparing his face and body to the standard anatomy of a male. “I would look at mine and wonder if I’d ever be able to pass.” Looking back, though, he realizes that there is no one correct way to be a man. “Don’t look at bones,” said Heirzler, as he emphasized that if you compare yourself solely to what you’re not you will never be happy.

“There’s no one way to be trans or to be non binary,” says Ball. Ball also reminds people that uncertainty doesn’t invalidate your thoughts. “Questioning your gender is something a lot of people do and it’s completely valid.” For students who are questioning their gender identity or experiencing problems because of their identity and want someone to talk to, Baker highly recommends that they utilize their counselors. “We don’t know the answer to everything but we are a safe place,” says Baker.

-Madla Walsh 

Update on the New Middle School

In February of 2022, ORCSD will open the doors to its brand new middle school.

What began as a proposal in 2018, the new building for the Oyster River Middle School (ORMS) is now less than a year away from being complete. From the beginning, the ORCSD administration wanted the building to be a wealth of resources not just to its students, but to the community at large. During its development, students, faculty, and architects were brought together to create a fixture that would meet everyone's needs. From its structure to its mechanics, everything about the new middle school will be constructed to serve the entire community.

Throughout the spring and summer, contractors worked tirelessly on the building. Especially considering that the old middle school had so many issues with facilities, heating, storage, and even air ventilation, the ORCSD didn't want to waste any time getting started. The construction team began scoping out the area and digging for the foundation before the proposal was passed in the town election. According to Adam Downs, the head contractor working on the new middle school, they felt confident enough that the vote would swing in their favor, allowing them to begin working early. "If we had hit the ground the day after the vote had happened in March, we would have just now finished the foundation. We were lucky to get an early start.

Members of administration agreed with that sentiment. "It was really important for us to get ahead on [the construction],"

said ORMS Principal, Jay Richard. "When these things drag out, that's how issues tend to come up. We wanted to get started as quickly as possible."

Downs found that it was, and continues to be, one of the smoothest constructions he's been involved with. "Ironically, COVID-19 was a huge help for us. With less traffic at the middle school, we didn't have to

troubleshoot issues like construction obstructing the bus loop, and students getting too close to the site," said Downs. Jesse Fand, another head contractor on the middle school project, also pointed out that the drought this summer was helpful. "When you're building something, you usually have to account for rain days, and you can't get as much done during that time. This summer, the hardest day it rained was the day we broke ground on the property. Other than that, we had barely any issues."

Robert Sullivan, another contractor working on the middle school, agreed that there have been very few bumps in the process so far. "The only thing I can really think of is, when we were digging up and laying the foundation, we had to account for any pipelines that might be running under the field. At this point, though, it has been pretty standard."

If all continues smoothly, as those affiliated with the building's construction and design anticipate, the new middle school will open its doors in mid-February of 2022. As emphasized by Richard and Assistant Principal, Bill Sullivan, this opening will serve not only ORMS students, but the entire community. "I get the feeling a lot of people are excited about what we're doing, and they should be," said Richard. "The building really is made for everyone, and I think it is going to bring a lot of people together."

Not long after the construction process first began, the ORCSD brought on its architects. Among these were Steve Laput, Ron Lamarre, and Anne Ketter. According to Lamarre,

though getting the construction logistics squared away was the first priority, the design process was just as important. "We started off with a visioning process that engaged parents, students, faculty, and members of administration. When you're building something for the community, it's essential that you're focused on what their goals are," said Lamarre. From their feed

Proposed New
Oyster River Middle School



BAUEN CORPORATION LAVALLEE BRENSINGER ARCHITECTS



music department, the first level of the middle school houses a 900 seat auditorium that will encourage students to get involved with the arts at an early age, and act as a shared community space, just like the high school auditorium. The gym, located right across from the auditorium, also will have major improvements, the most notable being that it will be high-school regulation size.

The second floor houses the world language classrooms, where students will be pushed to expand their views not just through language, but through culture. Richard stressed the importance of this, saying “middle school is the perfect age to start learning new things, whatever they may be. It’s our responsibility to make sure our kids have the ability to receive that education.”

Floors three and four contain the fifth and sixth, and seventh and eighth grade classrooms respectively. As stated before, the class areas are built on top of one

back, the team determined four main pillars that they wanted the new middle school to represent: academics, sustainability, wellness, and safety and security. Lamarre said, “every part of the project had to be relevant to one of those pillars. Even the way the building will operate gets down to those core ideas.”

Indeed, the model for the school exemplifies them, and when the proposal passed in March of 2020 with an approval rating over 70%, the structure started going up.

Standing four stories high, the new building is designed so that students are streamlined to get exactly where they need to be. Whereas in the old middle school, students had to walk through other grades’ hallways, the new layout will ensure that classes can get where they’re going without having to walk the length of the whole building.

Additionally, many features are being implemented to enhance the learning experience at ORMS. For the



another so that students do not have to pass through the class areas of other grades in order to get to the gym, for example. This also allows students to exit the building much faster in the case of an emergency.

The last critical piece of the middle school is its sustainability. This, while not a main focus originally, became more and more important as the design team reached out to the community. According to Richard, the ORMS Sustainability Club put together a presentation for the architects on the importance of having a sustainable school. Sullivan also saw this presentation. “We definitely wanted the opinions of the kids, and that was great. They did a great presentation, and really convinced a lot of us to make some pretty big considerations.”

The main environmental goal of the new middle school is to be a net-zero carbon emission school, which means that the building would emit no carbon

into the atmosphere. Through geo-thermal technology, solar panels, and emphasis placed on natural lighting, the building will be the most sustainable of all four in the district. For those who are curious about the building's progress, there are a wealth of resources on the ORMS website under "New Middle School".

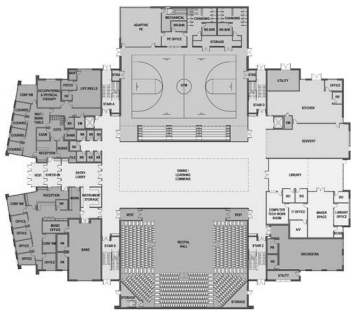
From an FAQ, to an animated fly-through of the completed building, community members can find all the information they need about ORCSD's newest edition. Any further questions can be submitted under the "What are your questions" link on the New Middle School page.

- Megan Deane 
Middle School Model rendered by Bauen corporation and
Lavallee Brensinger Architects

The Floor Plans

First Floor

Proposed New
Oyster River Middle School



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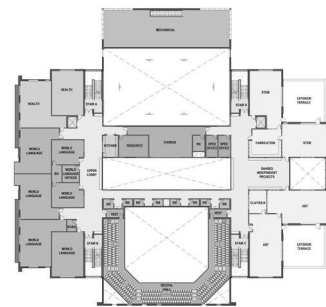


- Front entrance with two reception offices on either side
- Music facilities, including a band room, orchestra room, and 900 seat concert hall
- High school regulation size gym
- Cafeteria and kitchen facilities
- Library, computer lab, and additional work space
- Skylight

Second Floor

- Additional music facilities, including a chorus room and additional seating for the concert hall
- World language, health, STEM, and art classrooms
- Special education facilities
- Outdoor classroom access
- Balcony and skylight

Proposed New
Oyster River Middle School



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Oyster River Middle School



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Third and Fourth Floor

Third Floor

- 5th and 6th grade classrooms and student resource offices
- Science laboratories

Fourth Floor

- 7th and 8th grade classrooms and student resource offices
- Science laboratories

A Unique Perspective

A look back at Todd Allen's 36 years in the ORCSD

Having been a teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, ORCSD parent, coach, and athletic director, Todd Allen has seen the district from more perspectives than most. After 36 years in the ORCSD, this will be his last.

Allen has worked his way up in the ORCSD and contributed greatly to the community while doing so. Along the way, he proved how much of an asset he is through his strong leadership, ability to problem solve, and compassion for others. Additionally, what sets him apart is his valuable perspective when it comes to decision making. He knows what it is like being a teacher in this community, and therefore understands what is plausible for staff members and students to achieve, and has left an impact on many of the people he has encountered.

Allen has been surrounded by education his whole life. His father was a shop teacher and started one of the first vocational schools in Maine. "Education was always part of my vision of my future. I didn't necessarily think I wanted to be a teacher, but I always valued it pretty highly," said Allen.

Allen attended the University of Maine Orono, where he ran cross country and track. During his junior year, Allen realized he couldn't make money being a distance runner, and had to find a clearer career path. He was a political science major, but in his senior year, he decided he wanted to be a teacher: a job where he could combine his love for political science and coaching, and figured he would become a certified social studies teacher. He ended up graduating in the spring of '85 with a BA in Political Science, with concentrations in Economics and Education. His senior year, he student-taught at Bangor High School, and became a certified social studies teacher.

After becoming certified and right out of college, he saw an advertisement in the Boston Globe that ORMS was hiring a social studies teacher. This was the first job he applied for, and he got it. Going into this job, he didn't know anything about Oyster River or the surrounding community. "Right away, people were like 'how did you get a job at Oyster River? It's such a great school, I've been applying there for years.' [...] To this day, I don't know exactly

what it was I brought to the interview that caused them to hire me," Allen said. However, what started on a whim, ended up leading to 23 years as a ORMS social studies teacher. When reflecting on his time as a teacher, Allen said, "I definitely still long to be in the classroom. I love to debate, and argue, and particularly around the elections and politics, it certainly has crossed my mind, 'wow, how would I deal with all of these issues in the classroom?'"

Jason Demers, ORMS science teacher who worked with Allen when he taught, spoke to him as a teacher. "He made lessons real and related them to kids. He would sit there and just tell [students] stories and engage them. He just had a way about him, and even I caught myself in class listening to him because he's very engaging."

Allen was also the ORMS track and cross country coach for the entirety of his time at the middle school, which he thoroughly enjoyed. He said, "being a middle school track and cross country coach was fun because it was something I personally really liked to do and it was great to be working with kids that were also personally interested in it. We won a bunch of state championships, and it was a good program." However, this was not the only coaching he did. He also coached the ORMS boys basketball team for six or seven years, and was the ORMS Athletic Director for a few years. He shared that at one point, "I was a cross country coach, a basketball coach, a track coach, and the athletic director, and a teacher, and worked all summer."

Allen was very dedicated to his students, and has remained that way his whole career regardless of his position in the district. In 2008, Allen became the assistant principal at ORMS, when the former assistant principal quit, and he got a call over the summer asking if he wanted the job.

As for why he decided to leave the classroom, he said, "I think everybody goes through periods of time when they're like, 'is this all there is? Is there something else that I can accomplish with my life?'" Allen continued on to say, "when I became the assistant principal at the middle school, there were chronic issues that were very frustrating to teachers and I took the approach of 'maybe I can play a role in solving some of these problems.'" Allen described that, at the time, the issue was the master schedule. He



had gotten involved in the schedule committee and was already a part of forming a solution anyways, so he thought he could do more, and accepted the job.

When becoming assistant principal at the middle school, “his personality didn’t change at all. He was very approachable, always would listen, he would take perspectives, insight, and feedback,” said Demers.

Every step of the way, when moving up in positions, Allen said, “the situations [where I have stepped up] have usually been conflict or trauma oriented situations that needed somebody who was a calming presence, and I was able to give that. I’m not a person who loses his temper, or gets angry, or tries to force things on people. I’m very much a person who believes that you find solutions by collaborating with people and solving problems together.” Jason Baker, ORHS school counselor and Allen’s son-in-law, agreed with this, and said, “he doesn’t get angered, bothered or elevated by a lot. He’s very even keeled [...] He rules with common sense and thought versus his emotions, which is much needed in some situations.”

These unique assets made him a top candidate when the ORHS principal position opened up in 2011. He had a good relationship with the superintendent at the time, and when the School Board rejected the superintendent’s initial nomination, he asked Allen if he would step up. Allen agreed, thinking it would be a one-year position, but he ended up as principal for five years.

and track. This idea came to him in 1997 when he was riding home on the bus from a track meet very late at night. At the time, the only track in the area was in Rochester, so all New Hampshire meets were held there.

The school planned to just add a track, but not change any of the other facilities. After starting the project, the school realized all of the fields had to be improved. “The cost of the project went from \$250,000 to install a track to \$2.5 million to do a track, turf field, reconfigured baseball and softball fields with lights on the turf. Once the scope got bigger it took longer to figure out how best to pay for it all,” said Allen.

He continued on to say, “we started a fundraising effort, and raised the money which eventually went towards the field. It took us 19 years to get there. When I became principal of the high school, that was one of the first things I wanted to do: to get that field project underway.”

Allen also did a lot of work on the development of the new middle school. Because of his past experience working in the old middle school building, his unique perspective was useful, and he knew how important this new building was.

With that being said, he is also proud of the things he has achieved within the classroom. “I do think one of the things about being in the education world is that most of what you accomplish is invisible. You don’t normally put up a monument when a first grader learned to read, so it’s mostly a process or a role you

“...he understands what teachers can and can’t do, and understands how the dynamics work. He never lost sight of what it meant to be a teacher.”

As principal, Allen accomplished many things. Some of the major things he worked on was the negotiation of the Barrington tuition agreement and achieving a shift in the ORHS counseling program.

“Prior to bringing in Barrington students, enrollment at ORHS was declining and we were being pressed to cut programs. Negotiating a long term agreement for Barrington students to tuition into ORHS really saved a lot of programs and also helped the district pay for the new athletic fields. Today the district gets approximately \$2.5-3 million dollars in tuition revenue every year that has helped stabilize many programs at ORHS. It also added some great kids from Barrington to the ORHS student body,” shared Allen.

With the counseling program, Allen said, “early in my time at ORHS we recognized that student needs had changed and our programs needed to change to meet student needs. This led to what I would call a full-service counseling model where students are supported by their counselors in many ways, not just when it’s time to apply to college.”

Another tangible point of pride for him is the ORHS turf field

played. It comes down to relationships I had with kids, families, and community.”

Allen accomplished many things while principal, but also was a leader the staff respected greatly. “At the high school, when he was the principal, if I was like, ‘hey Todd we need to talk about a kid who might not graduate,’ I always admired that he’d think ‘whatever the kid needs, whatever you guys in counseling need, whatever the teachers need, if we can make it happen, we will,’” said Baker.

After five years as ORHS principal, Allen is now assistant superintendent, and he has been for the last five years. “My job as assistant superintendent popped up too. The person who had preceded me resigned at the end of the summer of 2015, and we needed an assistant superintendent. So the superintendent said, ‘hey Todd would you be willing to do that?’”

In a typical year in this position, Allen said he works to “co-ordinate curriculum and assessment planning, to make sure that teachers are trained the way they need to be, and are given the professional development to implement the programs we’re doing, that the curriculum aligns with standards, and to track student

growth.” He continued on to say, “the job on a daily basis is a lot of conversations and interactions with people on lots of different things.” With those being just a few of his duties, it’s clear Allen is an instrumental part of this district’s success.

Allen describes gaining all these positions as a series of “happy accidents,” but it is evident that he has been deserving of all he has achieved and has been a unique leader throughout. “[He talks with staff about] curriculum, what’s best for kids, trying to push teachers to use content that is meaningful to kids, and he is always willing to listen. One of the biggest aspects of Mr. Allen having

been in the classroom for years, he understands what teachers can and can’t do, and understands how the dynamics work. He never lost sight of what it meant to be a teacher,” said Demers.

James Morse, ORCSD Superintendent, added on

to why Allen has been so valuable over the years, and said, “he is a human being first and not the role. Lots of times we get trapped in titles, and he tries really hard to not get trapped in a title, and not be the authority figure, but to really engage people in meaningful conversation and solutions [...] He is an active listener and that has made for better decisions for the district.”

Over the years, there’s been a lot of positive change in the Oyster River community that he’s witnessed first-hand. Allen said, “when I first started working here, you had stereotypes of what kids from Durham, Lee, and Madbury were like. You’d walk into a classroom and could generally tell where each student was from. It didn’t seem like things were as blended as they are now. I think the school district plays a big role in that, but also, it’s the community investment in providing opportunities for kids, like Oyster River Youth Association, and other things that blends things together.”

While Allen will miss being directly involved in the community, he will also miss the relationships he had. He said, “I’ve made

a lot of friends. I’ll be around, but I’ll miss not having a reason to interact as much. Also, being able to see things that the kids are really excited about on a daily basis, I’ll definitely miss that.”

As for next year, he plans to not have a plan. “I started thinking about retiring, and I didn’t realize I was on the front-edge of a trend. Apparently, there’s something called a mid-career gap-year that a lot of people are doing these days. [...] People take some time off from their job, and they say ‘ok, let’s go do something else.’ In the back of my mind, I don’t think my time in education is done. It just might be a different role.”



Allen also has four grandkids, so “I spend time with grandkids and my kids, and it’s a lot of fun. I definitely intend to do more of that in the next year. I also hope to reclaim some parts of my life next year. I want to get back into running, and those are the big things.”

Baker said, “he believes in family. My youngest son wants no one in this world but him. The

second we go to their house, he’ll run right to grandpa. He’s just that guy. With School Board meetings, my kids think they’re boring but they want to watch them until grandpa gets on the stage.”

While Allen’s grandkids might not be seeing him at the school board meetings next year, Allen will still remain a valued member of the community. Over the past 36 years, he has certainly facilitated physical changes, but has also left an impact on everyone he has worked with for the better. Allen said, “I would like to think that my lasting impact on the district will be the relationships that I have built over 36 years in the ORCSD. One of the best things about staying in one place so long is that you get to know multiple generations of families and community members. The ORCSD is a very special community. During my time in the district I have taught thousands of students, gotten to know thousands of parents and worked with hundreds if not thousands of colleagues.”

- Holly Reid 

Photos provided by Todd Allen

Counselor of the Year

The New Hampshire Counselor of the Year Award goes to a school counselor who has had a notable impact on the community, advocates of others, and embodies the 3 domains of school counseling: supporting students academics, actively pursuing career development, and prioritizing the social and emotional needs of students. This year, ORHS's own Heather Machanoff won the award.

Machanoff has been the ORCSD Counseling Director for the past 13 years. Just this past year she stepped down from her administrative role to become a school counselor at ORHS. Her role as a counselor has greatly benefit students, through listening to their concerns and advocating for them at the state level. She has been instrumental in changing the counseling system in the district from that of a guidance counselor to a school counselor system, and making this system districtwide. These contributions are just a few of the many reasons she won this award.

After winning the award Machanoff has a few events coming up. There is the New Hampshire Excellence in Education Awards Ceremony (EDies), which come up in June. The EDies are to recognize and honor all of the educators statewide who won a state award. Then in January there are a few days of events in Washington DC, with all of the other school counselors of the year from each state.

To Machanoff, this award was very meaningful. "It definitely means a lot. You do work, and you don't know if you're impacting people. So I think that's what I take from this, I can see the positives and the changes but it's a nice feeling to know that your hard work is recognized and appreciated," she said.

Although she is very excited about the award, it has some slight drawbacks for Machanoff. "It's definitely weird to be the center of attention, because it's not my thing, I like to be behind the scenes, but it's definitely appreciated, especially when I put a lot of time and energy into my work," she said.

Kimberly Felch, the new ORCSD Counseling Director, was one of the two people who nominated her for this award. Felch along with Todd Allen, assistant superintendent of the ORCSD, thought she should be recognized for all of her hard work behind the scenes. "In particular her dedication to the fidelity of a school counseling program, and making sure that it is a program that reaches as many students as we can. She puts in endless hours to make sure we have a program that meets that. Also her role in mentoring me through this process, and really seeing how much passion, and heart and drive she has to do the best she can," said

Felch on why she nominated Machanoff.

The award is well deserved, explained Kim Sekera, a counselor at ORHS. "I think she won the award because she doesn't just think of her job in the context of what she's doing with her students. She's thinking much more globally. She affected change for our whole district. She definitely moved the school forward as far as making it a K-12 comprehensive program. It was well beyond the scope of her job," she continued.

As Sekera mentioned, Machanoff has made her fair share of impacts on students and the district as a whole. However, there have also been those who inspired her to get where she is today. Despite being a first generation college student, college wasn't necessarily on her radar growing up, but it was for her teachers, which she later reflects on as giving her confidence in academics. She ended up going to the State University of New York at Fredonia for a Bachelors of both the Arts and Psychology.

While taking an Introduction to Psychology class, she realized that school counseling was for her. "It was a meld of all of my interests. I like to talk, so communicating with people, and the creative side. I think everything we do with students is on the creative side because you're all individuals and we have unique relationships and programs," said Machanoff.

Right out of college she decided to go to graduate school at UNH, and graduated in 2002. In that same year, she got a job at Salem High School in Salem, NH. She worked there as a school counselor, alongside some great mentors such as the counseling director at the time. "She was a great mentor. She showed me how to navigate students with challenging situations, and to be able to separate those feelings of wanting to help, and then the reality of how you can go about doing that," Machanoff said.

Something super influential that her director at Salem taught her was that there is a time frame of when she started working as a counselor, in which she would not only help students but also take on their problems as well. Machanoff now stresses the importance of separating students' problems from her own, because that can weigh very heavily on anyone. Her old counseling director at Salem was influential in teaching her this skill as to be able to do her own job better.

Although she really enjoyed her job at Salem, after six years of working there she decided to become the counseling director at ORHS in 2008. "I was in Salem as a school counselor and was kind of looking for that next step, and was looking around for directorship. The location was a good fit and the philosophy of



school was a good fit and it all came together, so I applied and got in,” she said.

The process of applying for the counseling director position was very different than other positions Machanoff had applied for previously. Because it was an administrative position, she explained it was a bit more complex and intimidating.

Once she got to Oyster River however, the system in place for the counseling office was that of a guidance counselor. “I was here a year before her, under that old model of guidance it was all about course selection and college. It was really only about college prep and not really any other pathways,” said Sekera.

For Machanoff, this was a huge shift from Salem, where her schedule was constantly booked with student appointments. “For me, that was a really hard adjustment. There would be days where we wouldn’t see any students, and in Salem our schedules were booked. This is not to slight the people that were working here. It was the system they were working in,” she said.

Despite the challenge, Machanoff decided that she wanted to change this system. “You can’t have systemic change by being passive, and I think that is probably something that people like and dislike about me.

I had to push against the grain when I first got here, and I used to hear “that is not the Oyster River way.” It took a lot of time to make some of the changes happen,” she said.

She explained how Sekera was on board for the shift, and how the other two counselors at the time left due to other circumstances. This is when the counseling

department brought on two new school counselors: Kim Cassamass, and Jason Baker, which brought in some new energy that helped a lot in starting change.

The first step of changing the counseling system was by educating people about what the role of the job was. This shift was implemented by changing the name from guidance counselor to school counselor. Not only this was a name change, but this also was a mode of changing the entire system. “Yes, the name was important but that was the signifier that that change had happened. That was a pivotal change for people to realize that things were different. It came at the same time that people began to talk about mental health so it was sort of a perfect storm,” said Machanoff.

This new system consisted of three domains. There is academic, with choosing classes, along with letting students know what resources there are available. Then there is the career development domain, which is helping students think about career development and exploration. Finally there is the personal and social domain in which we try to meet students’ social and emotional needs, and having a place where they can come to. This new model aligned with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) motto.

It was around the same time that this was happening at the high school that the administrative team started to recognize that this was working, but that there was also a piece missing from the change Machanoff was implementing. This was that there needed to be a connection between the different levels of education from the younger grades up to the high school. Because of this Machanoff became not only the counseling director for the high school, but for the entire school district, K-12.

She explains that making this shift to a K-12 program wasn’t very well supported by the community. “In terms of the K-12 piece it wasn’t as hard because everyone knew it was important. We didn’t have really any pushback, but we didn’t have much community support. We had a couple evening programs and only had 10 people but it was better than 0 and we had to start somewhere,” she said. Although there wasn’t much community support, Machanoff explained that both the school board and administrative team were very supportive and vital for this systemic change.

Additionally, Machanoff had a very strong counseling department working by her side. Co-workers such as Sekera explained

how she was a great director. “It was from a very collaborative element. I never felt like she was telling us what to do. She was and still is such a strong leader. She leads by example, she works hard and motivates us to work hard. When you have a leader who is that energetic and forward thinking and collaborative, you want to emulate that,” said Sekera.

Although she was a great leader, she decided to become the fourth school counselor, for the 2019-2020 school year. This was a very tough decision for Machanoff because she enjoyed the big picture planning and relationships that she created

with the administrative team. However, she explained how a huge piece she was missing was directly working with students.

Many students at the high school really like having Machanoff as their counselor. “Mrs. Machanoff is super nice and a great listener, which is one of the most important aspects of a counselor. She’s always there to listen and also provides solid advice all the time, being realistic about things such as college, while also being encouraging and uplifting. She is also non judgemental and you can tell she has so much experience in the field,” said Mia Hricz (‘21).

Felch agreed with Hricz on what makes Machanoff unique, and said, “She puts so many hours into everything she does, and is always making sure everybody gets what they need to be successful. I have so much respect for her and recognize how passionate she is about our program, and meeting the needs of students.”

In the coming years, Machanoff will continue to positively impact her students and the counseling department through advocating for students and improving the department as a whole.



-Ethan Wilson 

Courtesy of Heather Machanoff

More Than A Superintendent: Dr. Morse

You might know him from visiting the SAU, where he is busy bouncing between rooms and buildings. You might know him from the school board meetings, sitting to the left of school board chair Thomas Newkirk, and offering an administrator's perspective. At the very least, you know him from the signature at the bottom of every email that declares a snow day for the ORCSD. With nearly ten years as its superintendent, Dr. James Morse has been a critical fixture within the Oyster River School District since 2012.

In recent months, his influence has magnified. The COVID-19 pandemic introduced a whole host of dilemmas and predicaments to schools across the country. Having already taken on significant projects, like the building of the new middle school, the ORCSD was forced to implement even more changes. As superintendent, Morse is not only responsible for the four schools that fall under his jurisdiction, but also the students, staff, and community members who are impacted by his decisions.

However, those close to Morse know his intelligence, passion, and composure makes more than capable for his position, even during a crisis. In that way, he is incredibly passionate about his work, and makes sure ORCSD provides kids with the best opportunities possible.

His student-focused mentality runs throughout the entire district, and his ability to think long term and see the bigger picture has benefited the community in all sorts of ways. Though COVID-19 has driven a wedge between citizens in terms of returning to school, Morse is relentless in making sure everyone's voices are heard, and everyone's needs are accounted for. It's no easy thing being a leader in the midst of an emergency, but Morse takes everything in stride.

In March of 2020, the country was hit with a pandemic that nobody was prepared for. Like most schools, ORCSD struggled to continue education during this time. Still, having a well established leadership team helped mitigate the fallout.

"Right from the beginning, he recognized that we needed to get the community involved in making decisions," Todd Allen, the assistant superintendent who has been serving alongside

Dr. Morse since he began working in the ORCSD, said. "In an emergency, you can't wait for one hundred percent agreement, but as long as the decisions are student-centered, he makes sure to keep the ball rolling."

Furthermore, Morse shared that "you have to make tough decisions in a crisis. And in this case, a healthcare crisis, safety is the top priority. I understand why some families don't agree with all of my decisions. The thing with the pandemic is that nobody is in the right or the wrong. It's all about balance."

Over the past year, Morse has been working tirelessly to maintain that balance. According to Kimberly Wolph, Morse's daughter at Head Nurse at ORHS, "he spent the entire summer, as well as almost each night, in meetings since the school

year started, planning for this school year and what it would look like. As I mentioned, he always put students and faculty first." Allen agreed, saying that things have been challenging, but with strong leadership, ORCSD has withstood a lot this year.

Hailing from Portland, Maine, part of what makes Morse adept in his role is his background. You may never guess it when speaking to him, but Morse had an incredibly difficult upbringing. In fact, he cites it as the reason he is so enthusiastic and empathetic in his role. "When you grow up in poverty, and in

the inner city, you see the worst kinds of stereotypes," he said. "This was also a time when there was 'tracking.' Wherever you came from determined where you ended up in school, and for me, that meant being put on the 'General Track,' where you didn't have much of a future."

The "tracking" that Morse is referring to here is undoubtedly unfamiliar to most ORCSD students. It used to be common that kids, from as early as elementary school, were set on predetermined tracks until graduation. These tracks dictated the types of classes one took, and the amount of opportunities one was given. Being placed on the "College Track" meant you were destined for success, but many students ended up on the "General Track," which lead nowhere.

Morse was placed on the "General Track" early on. For most of elementary and middle school, he struggled through his



classes, unmotivated to put in any effort when he had already been designated as an underachiever. By the time he got to his junior year in high school, he was done. “I walked out one day in October. I didn’t see the point.”

Luckily for Morse, though, he was given a second chance the summer of his senior year. After meeting with his guidance counselor, Morse decided to come back to school and finish his junior year over the summer. Not only did he manage to complete a year’s worth of classes in only eight weeks, but he did so with better grades than he’d ever had. With the continued support of his guidance counselor, as well as an English teacher he described as his “savior,” Morse got into the

“You have to make tough decisions in a crisis. And in this case, a healthcare crisis, safety is the top priority... The thing with the pandemic is that nobody is in the right or the wrong. It’s all about balance.”

“Onwards Program” at the University of Maine, and graduated with a Fine Arts degree. Soon after, he went back to school for another year to get a teaching degree, beginning his career in education.

Morse endured some of the most difficult challenges life had to offer, including starting a family, holding a job, and working towards a degree, all at the same time. According to Wolph, that perseverance was one of the most important lessons she learned from him. “One of the best gifts that he passed along to me and my brother when we were growing up was to never quit. If you must do the same thing over and over to get the result you want, then you need to keep trying.”

It is a testament to Morse’s character that he was able to persevere through such unlikely odds, but he also attributes his success to being “incredibly lucky.” In that way, once he became an educator, Morse was determined to make sure that students were no longer set up to fail from the beginning like he was. “Any kid should be able to take any class they want. If they’re struggling, but feel really passionate about pushing themselves, then it’s our responsibility to support that student and help them achieve their goals,” he said.

In order to implement that philosophy, he had to start small. Many would be surprised to know that Morse did not begin his career in administration, but as an art teacher. He described that he was an elementary school art teacher for many years before transitioning to a position as a principal. From there, he served as a principal, assistant superintendent, and, finally, superintendent. For most of his career, he worked in Maine, but in 2012, Morse took on his position at the ORCSD.

Allen described Morse’s arrival as incredibly important to the district. “When Dr. Morse came here, [the district] was having leadership issues. We’d just had a superintendent leave abruptly, and had an interim superintendent for a year. With almost 20 years of prior experience, Dr. Morse showed himself to be a person who sees the big picture right away. Instead of making snap decisions, he developed a lot of long term plans and got to work on them.

Many of the key parts of the district that students have come to know were a result of Dr. Morse’s implementation. In his first few years, Morse worked to complete projects like expanding the Moheriment Elementary School gym to be full size, building up the ELO program and hiring a coordinator, and improving technology across all four schools. He also helped the efforts towards putting in a turf field and track at the high school, building a new middle school, and becoming a one-to-one district, all things that have since paid off.

To some, this may sound typical of a superintendent’s role, but as Allen points out, most superintendents in New Hampshire don’t stay around long enough to complete such long term projects. “The turn over for superintendents is roughly three years here,” he said. “The fact that he’s been here for three times as many years cannot be undervalued. He’s provided us with stability and consistency that many other schools don’t have.”

As we enter the final stretch of the 2020-2021 school year, Morse is looking ahead to promising changes. “The restrictions in place for COVID-19 will eventually come to an end, and we have a lot of other exciting things happening in the district,” he said. Allen also pointed out that, no matter the circumstance, Morse is always focused on delivering the best educational experience possible to the community.

“He has one of the biggest hearts you can imagine. He just wants to help students as much as possible, and he leads with that philosophy,” Allen said. Wolph also noted this, saying “he believes deeply in educating children and supporting staff and faculty to make that happen in the way he believes it should. He wears his heart on his sleeve, and to this day, may still get choked up on a drawing that an elementary student made for him or a speech that a high school student gave. He is an incredibly caring person and it makes him a better leader and supporter of others.”

“Any student should be able to take any class they want. If they’re struggling but feel really passionate about pushing themselves, then it’s our responsibility to support that student and help them achieve their goals.”

For a final reflection on Morse, Wolph offered an anecdote from a few years ago. After giving a back to school presentation, he ended his speech by turning on the radio, cranking it to high, and starting to dance on stage. He then encouraged the entire auditorium, full of ORCSD faculty and staff, to get up and dance with him. “Life is short and at times can be stressful. When life moments happen that make you want to laugh, laugh. Never take yourself too seriously,” Wolph said about Morse.

Whether you agree or disagree with his policies, there is no doubt that Morse has had an impact on the ORCSD. From thinking big picture, to managing crises, and most importantly, putting students first, Morse brought a lot of positivity, not only to the schools, but to the community at large.

- Megan Deane 

Not Your Ordinary Art Teacher

Next fall, the ORHS art department will have big shoes to fill after the retirement of Tracy Bilynsky: a compassionate and dedicated art teacher who is a phenomenal artist and role model for her students.

Her contributions over the past 26 years at ORHS have made big impacts on her students and colleagues. Bilynsky has consistently demonstrated how much she truly cares about others through her actions. She is always willing to take the time to talk to a struggling student, lend a helping hand on an art piece, and will drop anything for her colleagues. While she will miss the community focused art department and enthusiastic students, she looks forward to being able to travel, craft, and spend time in nature next year.

Bilynsky grew up in Webster, New York, where her love for art developed. Her sister was creative, and her dad loved woodworking and was a craftsman, but she was introduced to art by her aunt and cousin, who were artists.

"I was kind of shy and always enjoyed drawing. It was very relaxing for me. I liked to copy cartoons when I was little, and I would sit with my aunt and my cousin and when they'd draw something, I'd try to draw it. It was a fun activity for me."

Although she was an active kid, spending lots of her days outside in nature, she also enjoyed quiet and relaxing things, such as art. After developing a passion for art as a young child, "I took art in high school, like people do.

I went to school for art education, not for fine art. I knew right away that I wanted to be a teacher when I was in high school and worked for the town in the summer camps. I always enjoyed that and had fun playing games with the kids, doing arts and crafts with the kids, organizing special events, and I just always had fun. So, when I thought about teaching I couldn't imagine teaching math or science or anything, but I was drawn toward art," she said.

After attending Buffalo State, which had the largest art education department in the country at the time, Bilynsky was prepared to teach many classes. "In art education, you don't get to specialize because you never know, when a job comes up, what it's going to be. You have to have drawing, painting, pottery, sculpture, jewelry experience, and more."

Bilynsky got lots of practice being adaptable, working in various school districts after college, which was needed for her field. She started out teaching 7th and 8th grade in Rochester, New York, and then taught at a high school and had to teach jewelry making and video production, which she had never done previously. At another high school, she started teaching photography, and also started a jewelry making program there.

Her versatile experiences set her up for a successful long-term career at Oyster River. For a few years she jumped around to various schools due to many 1-year positions being available, but after her husband got a job in the Seacoast area in 1990, she moved here permanently and started a family. When her kids were two and four, in the fall of 1995, she figured it was a good time to start working again. She took a part-time position at ORHS, starting

out teaching one or two class periods a semester, and gradually increased to working full time.

Since taking the job here, she's taught many classes including Introduction to Art, Introduction to Sculpture, Photography, and she said Pottery sticks out as a favorite. "There's something interesting about all of the classes. I think pottery for me is fun, because we're all working together. Maybe it's because of the room it's in; everyone sits around a long table, and there's a lot of communication in the class, and a lot of discussions about anything in school, or in somebody's life, so it gets to be a really close-



knit group."

Dora Bowden ('21) shared her pottery experience with Bilynsky. "I had Ms. Bilynsky for pottery and went into the class interested in art, but mainly took it for a credit for the semester. I left the class knowing how to actually make something interesting and was impressed with the skills I had learned,"

Whether it's sitting around the pottery table, or advising a student on a painting, Bilynsky has had an impact on so many students. Kaila Lambiasi ('20) took Introduction to Art and Photography with Bilynsky her sophomore year, and was a familiar face in the art department since. "I definitely haven't ever had as

much respect for another teacher. Not only did she urge me to go above and beyond in her classes with ease, she helped motivate me to keep up all my grades. I knew if I wasn't doing well in a different class, I wouldn't be able to spend lunch or a free period doing what I wanted to in the Art Department," said Lambiasi. Additionally, Bilynsky helped Lambiasi realize she wanted to do more with photography, and potentially become an art teacher later in life.

Tim Lawrence, fellow art teacher who started at ORHS the same year she did and is also retiring this year, added on to the impact she's made on students. "Just being around her makes you a better person. I've seen the way kids adore her over the years [...] She's everyone's mother in the art department. When people are having a bad day, whether you have her in class or not, she'll sit and chat with you about whatever you need to chat about. Anybody who comes into contact with her she has an impact on. We've got students from 25 years ago who miss her like it was yesterday."

However, students are not the only ones Bilynsky has had an impact on. Along the way, she's taught her colleagues many valuable lessons. Lawrence said, "I've learned every lesson from her. She came into this job already having taught for quite a few years. She just had so many skills already, and I went in as a pretty new teacher. So, thank God I had Mrs. B to ask every question."

Maria Rosi, fellow art teacher who has been working with Bilynsky for the past 16 years, explained that as a first year teacher, she felt as though she couldn't spend enough time with her students. Between having to clean up from one activity, potentially move work spaces, and set up for her next class, she was upset at her lack of time to build relationships. Bilynsky saw this and said, "Maria, there's plenty of time to clean later, but you'll never get time back with your students." Reflecting on that piece of advice, Rosi said, "It was such a simple statement, but it reminded me that although I had to live with the mess, the relationships I'd build with my students were much more important than the physical mess of our teaching space."

This story itself shows how valuable developing student connections is for Bilynsky, and Rosi reiterated that. "Over the years I've seen the relationships she's built with her students, and many students have said to me over the years that they think of Mrs. B as a mom. She cares about them like a mother would, and that says it all."

Many know that Bilynsky is a caring individual, however some may not know just how artistically talented she is. She may be too humble to say this herself, but, "she's a phenomenal painter, but she doesn't give herself enough credit. I would show people drawings she did, and they somehow would look at her differently when they saw these drawings. She doesn't do a lot of drawing in class in front of people, but they don't know the skills this woman

has," said Lawrence. Bilynsky may not do much art outside of the classroom, but she has recently gotten into quilting, and enjoys crafting.

Bilynsky described that she develops her own art as she develops assignments, and works alongside the students, with much of her art beginning as demonstrations. Being able to see her complete her work in real-time is very beneficial to students and their success. "She works really hard, and she completes all of her work to a high level of quality and craftsmanship, and I respect the fact that she models that for everyone around her. So, when her students are producing work of a high caliber, it's because they're watching Mrs. B do it," shared Rosi.

While she's left her mark on others and their talents, ORHS has also had an impact on her life. After looking back on her time here, Bilynsky will miss many things. "I'll definitely miss my colleagues and seeing them every day [...] They'll drop everything if

you need help and lots of times you don't even need to ask them, they just can see you need help. They're really supportive, creative, and excellent at what they do. I've learned a lot from them."

And as much as she'll miss her colleagues, they will miss her equally as much. "I'll miss everything about her. We haven't had an argument in 26 years. Our relationship is like brother and sister, but I argue with my brothers and sisters," said Lawrence.

However, she got into this career largely due to her love for working with kids, and she'll miss her students greatly. She said, "The kids are great. I'm not talking about just

talented students, but the students in general. They really try their hardest. I love when kids are like 'I just wanna get this class over with, I'm bad at art,' [...] and they end up taking two or three more art classes in high school. It's fun to turn kids on to their talents and potential in art."

A big thing that sticks out to people when asked about Bilynsky is her kindness for all. "She's just the kindest woman on the planet, and she'll never change," said Lawrence. She will leave big shoes to be filled next year, and Lambiasi summarized that. "She is the best role model to have as a high school student, and creates the most comfortable environment for her classes [...] Future ORHS students will surely be missing out when she retires."

As far as Bilynsky's plans in the coming years, she said, "my husband's already retired, so I plan just kind of doing things around the house. We like hiking, and we hope to travel. My daughter's in Chicago, and my son's in France, so hopefully when things open up we can travel. Our favorite thing is before dinner having a bonfire, where we sit and relax by the fire."

It's clear that Bilynsky has left an impact on so many people in and out of the art room throughout the years, and she's enjoyed herself while doing it. She said, "it's just gone really fast. It wouldn't have gone so fast if I didn't enjoy it so much."

-Holly Reid 

Photos by Kaila Lambiasi



The Man, the Myth, the Legend: Saying Goodbye to Mr. Lawrence

It's the 1980s and soon to be retired Oyster River High School Art Teacher Timothy Lawrence is making bank. As a young guy working for himself as a freelance artist and earning tons of money, Lawrence said he felt like he had everyone's dream job. However despite all of the benefits, he was miserable. It wouldn't be until years later that he would find out why.

Next semester, the ORHS art department isn't going to sound the same. Lawrence, known amongst students and faculty as a passionate artist and teacher who isn't afraid to speak his mind, will be retiring after 26 years of doing what he loves most. It is without a doubt that the ORHS community will be mourning this loss, so before we get teary eyed, let us join Lawrence as he guides us in a walk down memory lane.

Growing up attending a private Catholic school in New York, Lawrence used his art skills and passion for the craft to wreak havoc, drawing demons that he knew the nuns wouldn't be fond of. "I used it for evil," joked Lawrence. "I try to use it for good now."

While it's no doubt that Lawrence is using his skills for good, his mischievous side shows through when it comes to teaching students a lesson. Lawrence's former graduate intern and teaching colleague of 16 years, Maria Rosi, recounted a story that demonstrates Lawrence's in class personality. "This is a classic: Mr. Lawrence was sick and tired of his pottery students not signing the bottom of their pottery pieces. One day he decided to make an example of one unfortunate student with the goal of making a strong impression on the others so they would always remember to sign their work. He

brought a gorgeous pottery piece out of the kiln room, I think it was a teapot, and asked his class to listen up. With dramatic flair, he showed them there was no name on the bottom of it and dropped it on the floor, smashing it. I've heard and told this story so many times that, at this point, it's the stuff of legend. I don't know if I was even there. I imagine I was and witnessed the looks of shock on everyone's faces and then the dawning re-

alization on Mr. Lawrence's face when he learned that the artist of the unlucky teapot was none other than Mrs. Bilynsky!"

Before he was smashing his colleague's artwork at ORHS, Lawrence was attending various universities. In his eight years of higher education, Lawrence attended three colleges: the Art Institute of Boston, Pratt Institute, and the University of New Hampshire. "I had amazing teachers," said Lawrence. "Chris Van Allsburg, Maurice Sendak, I had some pretty heavy hitters as teachers and they were teaching during their most successful years so they didn't need the money. They were teaching for the love of it."

Before transferring to UNH, Lawrence was studying to get his Bachelors in Fine Arts at Pratt Institute. "Everything was absolutely remarkable about my experience at Pratt. The only thing was it was located in a very violent neighborhood. Af-

ter you get stabbed a couple times you start thinking to yourself, 'you know I think I need to move somewhere else.' I came up to Maine to visit a friend and one week later I had my car packed and I had moved to Kittery."

Attending Pratt opened Lawrence up to an abundance of opportunities. Some of which, he had no idea would come to be of any magnitude. "I was doing a lot of freelance art and working



for advertising agencies and I met this guy named Jake Burton one day. I had to meet him in his garage in Burlington, Vermont to do a painting of a pitbull with spit flying out of his mouth and his teeth showing and I asked, 'what is this going to be used for?' He said it's going to be used for a snowboard. I asked, 'what the hell is a snowboard?' He said it was like a surfboard for the snow and my buddy and I both started laughing. We were thinking, 'what an idiot- does he really think this is going to work?' But I did the job and I went to Vermont and I met Jake Burton, who was inventing snowboards at the time," said Lawrence. "I did Jake Burton's first snowboard."

While freelancing is some artists' dream, it was around this time when Lawrence began feeling like something was missing. "Artwork can be a very selfish and individual thing," said Lawrence. "Money didn't make me happy and I felt like that was the only thing I was doing. I didn't feel like I was helping anyone other than myself." Realizing that he had to rethink his life, Lawrence found himself at the last chance hotel.

The last chance hotel, as Lawrence referred to it, is better known as the Seacoast Learning Collaborative, a non profit school in Rochester New Hampshire that aids students who come from challenging backgrounds. "If they didn't make it there they went to the youth detention center after that so that was the last chance hotel," said Lawrence. "Once I started to teach these kids I realized, this is what I want to do. One way or another I need to be in a classroom with kids; I really dig their

him for Senior Studio, spoke to how Lawrence acts as a teacher. "Honestly, having Mr. Lawrence as one of my art teachers has been an amazing experience, both as his student and as a fellow artist," said Orringer. "He's open and friendly to everyone. He's always encouraging his students and is always pushing them to experiment with art and step out of their comfort zones. His classes have always been a lot of fun, and they've been one of the highlights of being in high school."

Lawrence does his best to encourage students and push them to get out of their comfort zone, including helping them have their artwork displayed in local galleries and begin selling their work. "Last year I started doing more professional development so that my kids could start exhibiting their work in a gallery and start making money and they did," said Lawrence. "I've been exhibiting my work for a long time and have turned on a few of my kids to the gallery. I started the season off last year as the first and only show at the Kittery Art Association Gallery because of the pandemic. My show was February first to March first and it was the only show that year. I had a solo wall and sold all of my pieces. The only people who sold all of their work were from Oyster River."

Madison Hoppler ('20), a former student who had her first showing at an art gallery in December 2019 and has made hundreds of dollars from exhibiting since, spoke to how Lawrence played a role in her career as an artist. "My Oyster River High School experience would not have been complete if I never took

"I did Jake Burton's first snowboard."

energy. Teaching was the only job where I felt like I was actually accomplishing something or doing something important."

While Lawrence enjoyed teaching, he decided that he didn't want to continue teaching every subject, he only wanted to teach art. Lawrence went back to school to get his masters degree and become a certified art teacher. He soon found himself with an internship at ORHS and it wasn't long before he was employed. "When I got to Oyster River I thought to myself 'oh damn, why would you go anywhere else?' You don't leave Oyster River to teach somewhere else. You come here and think, 'thank god.' So I put my roots down and I stayed. I've been the happiest guy ever for the last 26 years," said Lawrence. "Working at ORHS is the first certified teaching job I've had. And the only one I've ever wanted."

Teaching at the Seacoast Learning Collaborative and acting as a guidance counselor to kids who had experienced the worst helped shape the kind of art teacher the ORHS staff and students know him to be. "I admire his relationships with his students," said Rosi. "He sees his students as humans first and students second and that kind of sincere connection is what teaching is all about. Teaching high school involves much more than just the curriculum we are trained and educated for. Adolescence is a dynamic time in one's life, and ups and downs are inevitable. Mr. Lawrence develops trusting relationships with his students and has helped many of them navigate the tumultuousness of high school."

Abigail Orringer ('21), who had Lawrence as a teacher for Drawing and Painting I and II, Advanced Art, and currently has

a class with Mr. Lawrence. His classes really evolved around each student becoming successful in their own unique way in regards to art," said Hoppler. "Not only did Mr. Lawrence strengthen my skills in painting and drawing, but helped me establish myself as an artist in the community. He encouraged me to sell and exhibit my work at the Kittery Art Association. He guided me through the entire process of preparing for gallery shows by teaching me how to tediously matte and frame my work and how to price my work. Without his help and encouragement I would not be the artist I am today and I am so eternally grateful for his guidance."

Lawrence's efforts to help his students become the best artists they can be can be seen in more than his student's exhibits; they can be seen on the big screen. "One of my former students is turning down work from Disney because he's too busy," said Lawrence. "He did the backgrounds for Adventure Time and the second season of The Marvelous Misadventures of Flapjack. He bought himself a massive piece of property in Vermont and started a school for artists. Another former student is the Vice President of National Geographic and another made all of the models for Men In Black 3. Robert Eggers, who did the movies The Witch and The Lighthouse is a former student of mine as well."

Maybe we'll see another big time artist come out of ORHS in the near future. Who knows, since Lawrence's current students have been accepted into the top art institutions in the country. "Mr. Lawrence has helped me improve my art so much throughout this year, and I'm extremely grateful for all the guidance he's provided me as an artist," said Orringer.

It's not just the students he's reached; Rosi commented on how Lawrence has taught her to be a better teacher. "I've learned many things from Mr. Lawrence over the years and a few very important lessons during our first year together," said Rosi. "I remember being amazed at how he started a class and, after greeting his students and assessing where they were at, decided right then and there what the best plan was for that class period. He would allow his students to participate in the planning process and so they were invested from the start. Before observing this I thought I would always have to have every detail of every day planned completely. He may have had a plan but part of his plan was to allow for flexibility and student buy-in. This lesson has been very valuable for me over the years."

Part of Lawrence's ability to bring out the best in his students and colleagues may be due to his light hearted attitude and contagious laugh. "Mr. Lawrence laughs A LOT," said Rosi. "I'm really going to miss hearing his laughter echo through the department."

Rosi continued by saying what she's going to miss once Lawrence has retired. "What I will miss most about teaching with Mr. Lawrence will be the routine of a typical, ordinary day, greeting each other in the morning, maybe chatting and carrying on about something for a while. The day starts to flow during the first two periods and the three of us, Mrs. B included, organically flow through the three main teaching spaces, often on the move, crossing each other's classes, stopping to chat or assist with each other's students. We pride ourselves in being non-territorial. Over the years we often threatened, sometimes following through, changing places in the middle of class. I might transfer into Mr. Lawrence's drawing class and he into my Intro to Art class. We enjoy these moments of light-hearted spontaneity, students included."

So where is Lawrence going? What will he be pursuing after his departure? Lawrence joked that the reason for his retirement is his newest art endeavour. "Lately I've been carving granite which is why I've got to retire because it takes so damn long," said Law-

"I'm probably going to be a basket case on the first day of school if I'm not going to be here with my kids next year."


Even right now, while I'm home teaching remotely and he is in school teaching in person, I can sometimes hear his laughter in the background of my class meetings and it makes me smile."



rence. "I did a 300 pound harbor seal that's in my front bushes, I've got a 500 pound Icarus that I built into my wall, and I made a sink for my upstairs bathroom. My wife wants a tub so I'm going to build her a tub. It may take two years but she's going to get a granite tub."

While retirement may be something a good majority of people long for and look forward to, Lawrence is soaking up every second of in person interaction he has with the ORHS students and staff. "We've got a really amazing faculty. As much as I diss them now and then, they're really a remarkable group of people. I don't think I've ever been miserable to come to this building," said Lawrence. "I love the students here. I love the people I work with. I adore Mrs. Bilynsky and Ms. Rosi. I'm leaving because of Mrs. Bilynsky. I couldn't fathom being here without her. We started together and now we're leaving together."

While discussing his plans for life after retirement, Lawrence got choked up as he thought about not going to school on the first day of the upcoming fall semester. "The first day of school is going to come around next semester and I bet you I'm going to be the most miserable guy on the planet and I'm going to think that that was the worst decision of my life. I'm probably going to be a basket case on the first day of school if I'm not going to be here with my kids next year. I'm going to have to call Mrs. Bilynsky and we're going to have to go for a long walk because it's going to be a really crappy day," said Lawrence, "but now I have to go practice what I preach."

- Isabella Crocco 
Photos by Liam Ashburner

Sixty Years at Oyster River...

When Debbie Jabre ('73) first entered Oyster River as a student in 1961, she had no idea she would eventually be back in 1997 as the secretary to the principal. Now, Jabre is leaving Oyster River sixty years after first entering ORHS as a student.

After working as the secretary to the principal at ORHS since 1997, and having worked under six different principals and five different superintendents, Jabre is retiring this year. From handling events like graduation and the annual awards assembly, to simply being a friendly face in the front office every morning, students and teachers will miss Jabre for her kindness, welcoming personality, and her countless contributions to ORHS.

Jabre grew up in a large family and was the seventh of eight children. "My parents had four children before the war and four after, and my dad served in World War II as a Navy Medic," she said.

Before she started working here, Jabre grew up in Durham and attended Oyster River K-12. She reflected on her time as a student at ORHS, saying, "The mindset of the people is a lot different, because you're talking about the 60s and 70s, which was a little chaotic at times. They were protesting the war, so it's a different atmosphere today than it was back then, and it's for the better."

After graduating from Oyster River in 1973, Jabre went on to MacIntosh College and received an Associate's Degree in Applied Science with a Medical Assisting certification. In 1997, Jabre made her way back to ORHS, this time not as a student, but as the secretary to the principal. "I had grown up here, I had gone to school here, and I just thought it was a nice way to give back to the community," she said.

Throughout the years, Jabre has been instrumental in making sure big events at ORHS run smoothly, as well as smaller day to day things. She said that her job consists of "making sure everybody has what they need for their classrooms, making sure that the students have needs that are met, making sure that things run smoothly for any event that is held at the school."

When students walk into the front office at ORHS, they typically see and talk to the attendance secretary at ORHS, Lisa Richardson, because "Deb is always doing a million other things that people don't notice she's doing... A lot of people don't deal with Ms. Jabre, but when they do, they realize how kind she is and that she will do anything for you," said Tim Lawrence, art teacher at ORHS, who has worked with Jabre since she started at ORHS.

Jabre's willingness to constantly help everyone has been crucial for the whole building to operate smoothly. "We would have fallen apart without Deb. She's the grease in the cogs that keeps everything flowing smoothly. Without Deb we would be in big trouble," said Lawrence. "When Deb's not here, this place is a mess. 'What do you mean Deb's not in the building?' I've never thought that about McCann, Milliken, or Filippone, but I say that about Deb."

Part of the reason why Jabre has been so good at her job is how well she communicates with others. "Her openness to listen to people if anybody has a problem... She's willing to listen to people

and always tries to help them with any problem," said Richardson.

Other teachers have also admired this openness to talk about anything. "Deb and I have really great b*tch sessions because we can unload on each other," laughed Lawrence. "Then we come out of the office and take a deep breath and we can start fresh."

These positive relationships with co-workers is what Jabre said she will miss most about working at ORHS. "I feel like my job isn't a job. I feel like when I leave in the morning to come here, I'm going to my second family," said Jabre.

Some of the things she will miss the most are smaller day to day interactions with staff and students. "I will miss Mr. Lawrence coming in the morning to say hello and Ms. Richardson, a.k.a. Richie, bursting into song at the drop of a hat," said Jabre, a.k.a. Deb Deb to Richardson.



Richardson will also miss working right next to Jabre every day. "Working with her has been very easy. She's very easy to get along with and very friendly and helpful. When I first started, whenever I'd have a question she always knew the answer."

Other teachers reflected on Jabre's great sense of humor. Lawrence said, "Mr. Troy and I have really put Deb through a lot over the years. She controls our purchase orders, so we would say to her, 'Hey

Deb, we got to go down to the hardware store to get some left handed screwdrivers.'"

As for the students at Oyster River, Jabre said she will miss them just as much as the staff. "I enjoy watching the students come in as freshmen and see how they grow into young adults as graduation approaches. I always wonder how they are doing with life after ORHS," she said.

While Jabre will miss everyone at ORHS, she is looking forward to having more time for herself after retiring. "I'd like to take some courses that I have been unable to take, like I want to learn a second language, spend a lot more time with my grandchildren, and just enjoy the ability to be able to do things around the house," she said.

Additionally, Jabre loves to travel and has been to England, France, Italy, Hawaii, Alaska, and Las Vegas with her husband. "Our big plan was to have an RV and travel across the country with our two dogs and I wanted to see all the National Parks and the baseball parks, but that's on hold right now," Jabre said and hopes to eventually take that trip once COVID-19 numbers are safer.

Even though Jabre is retiring this year, ORHS students will likely see her around every now and then in years to come. "I was asked if I would come in and sub for the front office and I did agree to that, so once in a while you might see me," Jabre said.

While Jabre's time at Oyster River is coming to an end, she will be greatly missed by the Oyster River community after working here for 24 years.

-Emily Hamilton 
Images from Deb Jabre

HANNAH JEONG: a profile

After becoming the Doodle 4 Google state finalist in seventh grade, Hannah didn't spend too much time celebrating. Even after she spent months working on her submission, using fabric, paints, and sequins, Hannah was stuck. Like most artists, she was going through a phase where the work she was producing didn't feel genuine. Hannah was trying to find her own style in the world of art.

Hannah Jeong ('21) was the state finalist in 2016, and was honored at ORMS school-wide assembly. After creating art her entire life, Jeong was finally seeing her art being recognized by the community around her. Jeong was submitting her art to competitions and winning, but while most people saw this as a reward, Jeong felt lost in her art. Jeong would have to re-evaluate what art meant to her in order to become a better artist. Taking risks and even failing at times were learning curves that would set her on track to creating real and relevant pieces to her, and not just judges. Now almost five years later, Jeong creates art that allows people to see what she's feeling in the moment and how she interprets her experiences in life through her work.

Looking at Jeong's current work, it's clear that she's come a long way with her art. "My parents always say that I've just always been drawing, even though that sounds super cliché," Jeong joked. "I've just always had a pencil in my hand. I would trace characters on book covers. I would always rather just stay inside and draw, and I filled up a bunch of sketch books."

Jeong and her sister, Mary ('23), are both very artistic, and have been making art together ever since they were little. "I grew up most of my childhood drawing with Hannah and learning from her.

She was my art teacher in some ways, and we spent a lot of time making art together," recalled Mary. "Even though they were

mostly good times, I must admit that I was always so jealous of her because she was so talented," Mary joked. "Today I can say that I'm really proud of the artist she has become."

Both Jeong and her sister have a strong passion for art. It's always been something they chose to explore on their own time since they were little. Before living in Durham, Jeong and her family lived in Boston, where she first took art lessons. "My mom

took me to art lessons in second or third grade, to a woman in our neighborhood," Jeong said. "I guess I learned more of the technical aspects with art. At the time it was just super fun for me, and I loved doing it." Because Boston had more resources, Jeong mostly stopped taking lessons when she moved to Durham. Jeong still went on creating art, even submitting her work into competitions.

Jeong first heard about Doodle 4 Google from her aunt, who suggested she and her sister submit. Doodle 4 Google is an annual contest where artists from elementary to high school submit their own design for the google logo, with the chance to have it displayed on Google.com. The 2016 theme was 'what makes me... me', and allowed artists to work with any mediums they chose.

Jeong reflected her creativity and love for fashion in her piece. "I said that I wanted to be a fashion designer at the time," Jeong said. Jeong took advantage of the

resources around her, and used different mediums and layers to her piece. "I tried to include fabric on the paper. I put glitter and sequins, as well as painting and drawing. I was just trying to make it really big and fun."

When the state winner was first announced, Google wanted to surprise Jeong with the news. "I didn't even know that I had won originally. They were going to surprise me in school, but then there was a snow day, so my parents were like, "hey, check the website", and then I won," recalled Jeong.

"Around that time actually, after I won, I was kind of in a slump," Jeong said. "I felt like I was just making art for competitions, and making it objectively good for other people. I think I felt like it was more for other people than for me."

With this celebration came the "slump" that Jeong mentioned. It was hard for Jeong to separate herself from the work she was doing before, because she was used to creating art for competitions like this one. With a prompt and directions that told her exactly what the judges were looking for, Jeong didn't always have to search deep within for a winning piece. Even while she was winning competitions, Jeong wasn't happy with what she was producing. "I kept improving and getting better, but it didn't feel the same for me. Art didn't bring that same childhood joy that it used to, which is really sad because it was obviously a huge part

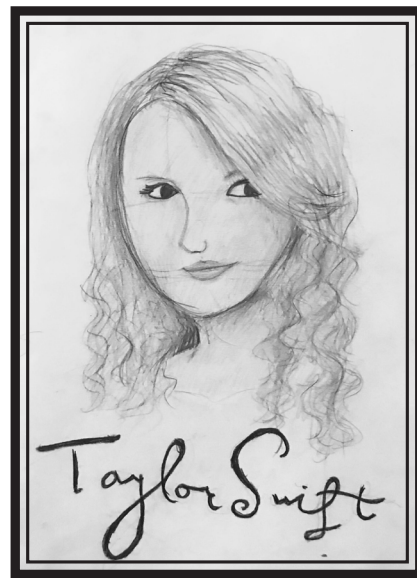


PHOTO TAKEN IN 2008 WHEN JEONG WAS 5.

ARTWORK FROM 2011, WHEN JEONG WAS 8. DURING THIS TIME, JEONG WAS INTERESTED IN DRAWING PEOPLE AND TRYING TO COPY PICTURES.

of my life,” Jeong said.

Jeong’s sister has seen her journey as an artist since the beginning, and is able to tell when Jeong is in a rut through her work. “There were a few times in her life where she found no motivation to create art, discouraged from lack of inspiration or a big obstacle. But she always came out of it and in the process became a better artist,” Mary said. “In the past year, she has worked on multiple self portraits, and it seems like she has found her voice through self expression through them.”

When it comes to creating art that fully reflects herself, Jeong says she’s not quite there yet. From talking to Jeong and ORHS art teacher, Timothy Lawrence, self representation in art is difficult to master, as people are always changing. While Jeong struggled with this earlier on with her art, she said, “I am definitely on the way there.” Since recognizing in seventh grade that she needed to re-evaluate where her art was coming from, Jeong was able to work over the last few years to find her voice.

After working without lessons for the last few years, Jeong made the decision to focus more on her art and find direction in what she was making. “Starting last summer, I took an online pre-college program at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. That really helped me learn how to make whatever I wanted. It also helped me learn how to fail, and to not be afraid of failing,” said Jeong. “I learned to just take a bunch of risks, and that it won’t always work, but that’s okay.”

As summer came to a close and Jeong entered her senior year of high school, she started an AP drawing portfolio, which she took as an ELO. Because this course isn’t offered at ORHS, Jeong worked with Lawrence, checking in with him about her progress with her portfolio.

“I started making a bunch of pieces for my AP art portfolio,” Jeong said. “With those, I learned how to experiment and just make things that were a reflection of what I was feeling and what I was thinking, instead of being like, ‘oh, I think people would like this,’ or ‘I think this would win something.’”

For Jeong, finding the ability to create without worry of what others think was the biggest challenge in her journey with art. She had to learn to make mistakes, but more importantly, be comfortable in knowing that she could learn from those mistakes and move on. Separating her genuine art from art she makes for the purpose of others is something Jeong has begun grasping over the last year or so, with the help of her classes and teachers.

“Hannah was in my drawing and painting 1 class. It was her

sophomore year, and she was one of the youngest students I had in that class. She didn’t seem the youngest, only her age made

her the youngest, but her work was already pretty sophisticated at that point,” Lawrence recalled. Jeong and Lawrence have been working together for the majority of Jeong’s highschool years, especially over the last few months as Jeong begins to put together her portfolios.

With Jeong making

significant growth with her art since last summer, she has been producing work that Lawrence describes as different from her work last year. “Often, we don’t see students grow too much over highschool, but every once in a while we see a student who is in need of growth. What they did last week doesn’t serve them anymore. With Hannah she was observing and observing, and everything was going well, but after a while when everything is going spectacular it gets a little boring, and you have to start to reinvent yourself,” Lawrence explained. Lawrence noticed that that is what Jeong did this year, as she had to let go of her old achievements in order to grow closer to herself as an artist.

Last year, Jeong won two gold keys for the art she submitted to the Scholastic Art Awards, which means her awarded pieces automatically jump to national judging. “She could have taken those two gold keys and put them into a portfolio this year, but she reinvented the whole portfolio... because that was last year’s work,” said Lawrence.

“She produced a whole new body of work when she didn’t have to.”

Jeong’s sister agrees with Lawrence, and is proud of how far she’s come with her art. “I have definitely seen a higher engagement with her and her artwork in the past years, especially the recent months leading up to college applications. She would dedicate hours in her room and in the basement creating and working on new pieces to complete her art portfolio,” Mary said.



JEONG RECEIVING HER AWARD, STANDING NEXT TO HER 2016 GOOGLE 4 DOODLE SUBMISSION



ABOVE AND TO THE RIGHT ARE PIECES JEONG COMPLETED IN HER FRESHMAN YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL.



Lawrence also stressed that Jeong has worked hard to find her voice in the art she produces, even if that means producing art that others may not understand. Jeong uses tracing and shading that may be confusing for others, and leaves her work up for the viewer's interpretation.

"She's starting to say more in her work," Lawrence acknowledged. "Her work spoke of a sense of belonging, and the fact that she didn't feel she had a place here or a place in Korea. I thought, 'that was a really powerful thing for her to be speaking about.'"

The theme Lawrence talked about above was part of Jeong's greater collection on 'belonging.' "I was looking for places in my life where I could show my process of struggling with or finding belonging," Jeong explained. "I think the idea of having two distinct cultural identities was a way for me to show that. It's definitely not the theme of all my work, but it's one part of what makes me who I am, and I wanted to show that theme through different parts of my life."



While Jeong is beginning to focus on art that comes from her, she still enjoys painting others,

even if they have no connection to herself as an artist. Jeong found the time to create an Etsy account where she takes custom orders, mostly for family portraits.

"I was inspired by my sister, who does pet portraits," Jeong explained. "I think it's so fun to draw people. Everyone has their own unique little things, and I thought it would be fun to capture that, and hopefully make some money on the side." Jeong's favorite type of art is portraiture, so painting others for her Etsy was something she could really enjoy.

"I just put up my listings, and I think because my prices were pretty reasonable as I was just starting out, I got most of my orders from people looking at custom family portraits," said Jeong. She noticed that a lot of people were placing orders around the holi-



days, making this a full time job for Jeong from Thanksgiving to New Years.

Sadie Garland ('20) has been friends with Jeong for a couple years now, and placed an order from Jeong's Etsy for a family portrait as a gift to her mother. "I purchased a digital portrait of my family from Hannah's Etsy shop. It was really incredible; I just sent



THE ARTWORK ON THIS PAGE IS FROM 2020, WHEN JEONG STARTED GETTING MORE CONCEPTUAL WITH HER WORK. THESE ARE PART OF HER AP DRAWING PORTFOLIO ON THE THEME "BELONGING".

her a couple pictures of my family together and she took it all from there to create an amazing drawing of us all. We actually have it hanging up in our living room," said Garland.

Garland finds a lot of Jeong's work on her Instagram account where she posts other portraits she's done. Garland and her family were extremely happy with Jeong's work.

"Hannah was able to capture the details of my family in a really amazing way. The facial expressions and the way we are all interacting with each other in the picture is very true to life. It truly shows her talent and attention to detail," Garland said. "Whether it is a portrait like she did for my family, or any of her other art, Hannah is an incredible artist and each piece exemplifies that talent."

As Jeong finishes her senior year of high school, the decision of what to do next rapidly approaches. She knows art is where she belongs, but finding the field that best suits her work is still in the works. "Honestly, I pretty recently cemented that I wanted to do art in college. I'm not a hundred percent sure at all what path in art I want to pursue. I'm partially interested in a lot of things, but it's hard to imagine myself going into a job. I'm interested in graphic design, illustration, product design, and fashion design could be cool. I'm pretty unsure about what I want to do, but hopefully going to art school will help me figure that out."

Lawrence is excited to watch Jeong bring her art into the world. After first meeting her, Lawrence joked that he would find it hard to keep up with Jeong her senior year. "She has what I'd call a gift, but she works damn hard at this gift," said Lawrence. "All I know is that this is one young lady who should not do anything but art."

- Chase Amarosa 

All Artwork Taken from the Collection of Hannah Jeong

French Fries: The Long Awaited Sequel

The Ranking:

1. Lee Circle Grocery on Wheels
2. Wildcat Pizza
3. Fry'd
4. Franz's Food
5. Chick-Fil-A
6. Lexie's Joint
7. Wendy's
8. Pizza Spinners
9. Burger King
10. McDonald's
11. Hop + Grind
12. Five Guys Burgers and Fries
13. Buffalo Wild Wings

We are back and better than ever. After exploring the local donut world in full last issue, we knew our loyal *MOR* readers deserved a sequel. We pondered over what staple food everyone loves and thought, what better food than french fries? If you haven't read "Donut Mind If I Do..." found on mor.news, you can check out our official ranking of the local donut scene there.

At all of the thirteen places we visited in the Seacoast area, we ordered their version of a small plain fry, without any toppings, so we could have a solid control across the board. It should also be noted that we dipped each fry in ketchup.

The six categories that we critiqued each restaurant with were potato taste, salt ratio, crispness, fluffiness, thickness, and affordability. Potato taste was obviously based on our own preference, but had a lot to do with the quality of potato, and how much that was able to shine through while eating. We looked for the authentic potato taste that was real and earthy, as opposed to processed and bland. As for the salt category, it was all about the ratio. Too much would be overpowering, but not enough is arguably just as bad and leads to a less satisfying bite. The crispness category was about the outside of the fry and how it made a good bite overall to get that crunch. An ideal candidate would be perfectly golden brown with an audible crisp when chomping down on the fry.

Crispness dealt with the outside coating, which leaves fluffiness to deal with the texture on the inside. No good fry is mushy or gritty on the inside, so it was important to us to make sure the best fries were soft and fluffy on the inside. Thickness had to do with the size of the fry. Too thin meant dry and small, and too thick often leads to undercooked and soggy, so to score well in this category, the fry had to be just right in the middle. Last was affordability, which took into consideration how "worth it" the fry was for the price that we paid.

Restaurants had the opportunity to earn a maximum of five stars in each category, and the final rating was an average of all six categories. Below are all thirteen restaurants in chronological order based on when we visited each.

Name	Salt Ratio	Crispness	Potato Taste	Thicknes	Affordability	Fluffiness	Average
LCG on Wheels	4	5	5	5	5	5	4.8
Wildcat Pizza	4	5	4	5	4	5	4.5
Fry'd	3	4	5	4	5	5	4.3
Franz Food	4	4	4	4	5	4	4.2
Chick-Fil-A	4	3	3	5	4	3	3.6
Lexie's Joint	4	5	5	1	4	2	3.3
Wendy's	5	3	2	2	4	4	3.3
Pizza Spinners	3	5	3	4	3	2	3.3
Burger King	5	2	2	3	4	3	3.2
McDonald's	5	2	2	2	4	3	3
Hop + Grind	2	2	4	4	3	3	3
Five Guys	5	1	4	2	4	1	2.8
Buffalo Wild Wings	2	1	1	3	1	1	1.5

McDonald's - 3.0

We decided that this time around we would start with an American classic and the pinnacle of fast food culture: McDonald's. Fries being an important part of their menu, we went in with high expectations. Of course we had eaten a McDonalds fry before, but never under such a critical lense. Were we really getting good quality fries, with the crisp salty flavor we were looking for? Or had we been seduced by Ronald McDonald with his red curly locks and golden arches? When we got the fries and looked at them objectively for perhaps the first time ever, we realized that they were bound to let us down. They were thin and pale, even though they had just come from the fryer. When we took our first bites we came to several conclusions. Although they were thin and not very crispy which disappointed us, they were salted perfectly and the grease from the fries coated our fingers pleasantly while we ate. We also realized that we couldn't stop eating them, and we decided that even though the potato flavor was barely there that they had some redeemable qualities especially with the low cost of \$1.39 that McDonalds provides.

Wildcat Pizza - 4.5

While Wildcat Pizza, or any pizza place for that matter, probably isn't known for their french fries, they certainly will be after this article. Sure, these fries looked fairly golden brown and smelled pretty good, but we had no idea what awaited us until we bit into the crispy fry. You could hear the crunch as we bit down, and before the potato flavor could even hit our taste buds, we knew that Wildcat would be a frontrunner based on crispness alone. Past the truthly euphoric feeling of that initial crisp, we found these fries had a great potato flavor, but could have used a tad more salt. In addition to the crispness and legit potato flavor, Wildcat's fries were thick and undeniably fluffy, scoring a 5/5 in each of those categories. Wildcat Pizza ranked fairly high in the affordability category, as we found that \$3.50 was reasonable for the large amount we received.

Franz's Food - 4.2

Franz's Food was a wildcard; neither of us had ever eaten fries from there and we didn't have any expectations going in, which made it that much better when they were delightful. For the price of \$3.25 we were given half a pound of golden brown fries that made our mouths water. The outside of these fries resembled the crispy, almost battered feel of the fries from Wildcat Pizza, but with a more salty, traditional seasoning, that would make the inventor of french fries proud. It should be noted however, that they were less crispy than Wildcat but not by much. They were thin but still managed to be fluffy on the inside like they should be, and not fried so long that they were tough.

Five Guys Burgers and Fries - 2.8

If we were ranking burgers in this article, we can assure you that Five Guys Burgers and Fries would have an easy shot at first place. However, in the fries department, we were a bit underwhelmed. Unlike some of the other crispy on the outside, fluffy on the inside potato treats we had tried, the texture on these was off, as they were neither crispy nor fluffy. With that being said, we appreciated these fries for their authentic potato taste, similar to that of a fresh baked potato, and the perfect amount of salt. And in classic Five Guys fashion, you can't not love the surprise fries left in the bag after you finish your food. While leftover fries in the bag was obviously not one of the categories we were taking into consideration, it definitely made the experience more enjoyable.

Wendy's - 3.3

Now I know that it's a controversial statement to start off the Wendy's review with but we have to say it. Wendy's fries are better than McDonalds. Now that's not to say they were good, they were just better. But if we're looking at all the places together, which we are, they were altogether just alright. The first thing to note is that they had a good amount of salt that saved them from the fact that the rest was pretty mediocre. With the salt they upped the game as far as the fast food joints had gone so far, beating out McDonalds. They were crisp and fluffy but overall too thin and didn't have that much of the potato flavor that really differentiates between a low quality fry from a high quality one.

Lexie's Joint -3.3

Our next outing took us to Lexie's Joint in Dover. We placed an order for two burgers, two milkshakes, and of course, an order of french fries. While we would normally indulge on an order of Bistro Fries from Lexie's, for the purpose of this experiment, we couldn't have any herbed aioli, bacon, or parmesan cheese that may

give Lexie's an unfair advantage. With that being said, we reluctantly ordered plain fries. Our first impression was that these were very thin, and we personally would much prefer a thicker fry. This thinness also negatively impacted the fluffiness category, where Lexie's lost big points. However, they were able to gain some back by having a great potato taste and perfect amount of salt. This was definitely a learning experience for us, as we found what makes Lexie's fries so unique are not the fries themselves, but the toppings added. For what it was though, we found the \$2.60 price very reasonable, scoring Lexie's fairly high in the affordability category. While we may never get a plain fry from Lexie's again, it only gave us more appreciation for some of the other choices on the menu.

Chick-Fil-A - 3.6

I bet you didn't expect this one from two New Hampshire girls,



Our well deserved champion: Lee Circle Grocery on Wheels

but we were very committed to finding the best fries we could, so we drove just about an hour away to give these bad boys a try just in case they were incredible. It was the only restaurant that changed up the shape of the fry, bringing a whole new discussion to the table when they served us waffle fries, which got us very excited as you can imagine. Two esteemed food reviewers with something new on our hands? After weeks of the same old shape we couldn't wait to dive in. They were fluffy and salty, but they tasted bland. However they were thick and big, and you got a good bang for your buck with the cost being just \$1.55. In the end we decided that maybe the exciting new shape was too much, and that maybe they should have focused a bit more on the taste of the fry itself. It was a very good vessel for sauce though and so if that's what you're looking for, we will send you off to Chick-Fil-A with a smile on our faces and the recommendation that you try their famous Chick Fil A sauce. But if you're looking for the best fry around, then maybe you should take your business elsewhere. Overall, Chick-Fil-A was a middle of the road experience.

Buffalo Wild Wings - 1.5

On our drive to Newington, we had high hopes for Buffalo Wild Wings. For a place known for chicken wings and other appetizers to snack on, we were confident they would make a decent fry. For a Tuesday at 8pm, B-Dubs was packed, and after placing our order for one small fry, we waited in the parking lot for forty-five minutes for it to be ready. Unfortunately, we can't say that the wait was worth it. Right off the bat, we knew something was up by the pale yellow color of the fries, as opposed to our favorite crispy golden brown. For lack of better words, these truly tasted like cardboard. We couldn't describe the taste of these in any other way even if we tried, as they literally tasted like nothing with a hint of, but not nearly enough, salt. For the small amount we got, coming in at a whopping \$4.29, this fry was not only bad,



Our cardboard-like experience from Buffalo Wild Wings

but extremely unaffordable for the quantity and quality that you receive. After scoring one star in the crispness, potato taste, and fluffy categories, we can't say these were a favorite of ours.

Lee Circle Grocery on Wheels - 4.8

After the donut ranking we had done, we knew that you could not judge a book by its cover, or a restaurant by its size. With the winner of the donut article being Coffee Craving, which is just a small trailer, when we pulled up to LCG on Wheels, another food truck, we knew not to make any snap judgements. And oh boy were we in for it. Let me tell you, these fries could be in a museum. Long and yellow with perfect edges, these fries gave us things we didn't know we were looking for. They were definitely the prettiest ones we tried and even though it isn't part of our official ranking system, we thought it was worth noting. They were \$3.75 which we thought was a fair price for the quality we got. We were burning our tongues eating them so soon after they were in the fryer but we couldn't help it; once we started we wanted to keep munching away. Again when we bit into them you could hear the crisp crust that protected the fluffy potato within. The salt was good and the flavor was solid and it all came together to give us a really satisfying experience especially after the let down we had the night before when we had gone to Buffalo Wild Wings.



If you look close enough, you can see the high levels of addicting sodium that Burger King provided us

Burger King - 3.2

After our success at Lee Circle Grocery, we made our way to Burger King in Barrington. So far, our front runners had not been fast food restaurants, and instead more of the local joints. Our experience at Burger King held true to that. While the salt level on these was addicting and had us going back for more, the actual taste of the fry was not there, and like Buffalo Wild Wings, essentially tasted like nothing. Aside from the salt level category, where Burger King scored a 5/5, the rest of the categories ended up right around the middle, making for an overall, mediocre, middle of the pack kind of fry. These fries weren't horrible, and I'm sure



If only you could smell these fries from Pizza Spinners...

they would pair great with a burger or chicken nuggets, but on their own were underwhelming. However, due to the perfect salt level, we finished these off without a problem, and were satisfied without \$2.39 purchase. Compared to their fast food competitors, Wendy's and McDonald's, we decided they were slightly better than McDonand's, but just couldn't catch up to Wendy's #7 spot.

Pizza Spinners - 3.3

Pizza Spinners was a little on the pricey side compared to their competitors being priced at \$4.65, but they gave you a lot so we weren't too troubled by this. As soon as we got the fries and smelled them, we knew we were in for a treat. They were big and warm with a really good deep golden color. The first bite we weren't too sure how we felt. But the more we ate, the more we enjoyed them. The outside was nice and crisp but the inside was just a bit too soft. We decided that soggy was the wrong word because the outside was so crisp but we just weren't as sure about the fluffiness of the potato. They were really addictive once you started eating and they had a good amount of salt.

Fry'd - 4.3


Our next stop was back to Wildcat Pizza - but not for Wildcat itself. Operated out of Wildcat Pizza after hours, Fry'd is UNH campus' latest hotspot, known for their cheap, late-night comfort food, as well as their unique hours (10pm-2am). This was unlike any place we had ever seen, which made us even more excited to try it. We eagerly waited in Sammy's parking lot on opening night, until 10pm when we quickly placed our order online. It was a good thing we did, seeing as how when we pulled up twenty minutes later, Fry'd was ambushed by hungry college students, and it

was soon announced by one of the owners that they wouldn't be taking any new orders after receiving 70+ orders almost immediately. It's no surprise they are doing so well after we were finally able to try one of their fries. For \$3.50, this treat was not only affordable, but also scored highly in all other categories, with 4s and 5s across the board. The texture was there, making for the perfect fry with a crispy coating surrounding the fluffy potato filling. As for the taste, a bit more salt would have been nice, but the taste was there. If you are awake during their hours of operation, we would recommend Fry'd for their fries of course, as well as other late night munching.

Hop + Grind - 3.0

We think out of all the fries we tried, Hop + Grind fries were the most different. They were more brown in color and had almost no salt. We know that they have a lot of different kinds of fries with a variety of toppings here, and I think that the fries we got would be a good base for those more extravagant flavors because they themselves weren't very flavorful. They weren't crispy but the potato was very fluffy and the potato flavor was strong. We thought some more salt would really take them to the next level, which we're sure comes with the fries they have with toppings, but that's not what we were judging so unfortunately I think they may have shot themselves in the foot with a nondescript basic fry.

All in all, we can say that we had a great time eating at the reasutraunts of our community, and that everyone had something to offer. Going forward, we hope that you can now enjoy a dinner out without the constant apprehension of whether or not your side of fries will be as delicious as you hope, and that your mind can be at ease. We hope you agree with our ranking; we are quite confident in it, however it is true that this ranking is completely subjective, so we encourage you to go out and make a ranking of your own and see how our list fares against your standards.

-Emily Hamilton & Sadie Hackenburg 



Above: a late night trip to Fry'd

The Commodification of Mental Illness

When I was in middle school, administration sent out a mass email about the show *13 Reasons Why*.

The purpose of the email was to warn parents about the themes presented in this teen-targeted show, specifically themes of self-harm and mental illness. Unfortunately, it didn't matter if you avoided watching the series itself. The most upsetting of the clips had already been uploaded to social media in a vicious cycle of morbid interest, consumption, and sharing with others. The most disturbing and popular of the clips involved one of the main characters on the show taking her own life. *13 Reasons Why* turned suicide into a commodity.

The media we consume has undergone a massive transformation in the past decade. Whereas the topic of mental illness was mostly taboo during the 20th century, today it has gone so far as to become popular subject material in the internet age, frequently manipulated for the sake of shock factor. This dramatic cultural shift has had devastating effects, especially on young people, as they see these raw and complex struggles being used as cheap entertainment rather than being meaningfully discussed. Romanticized and inaccurate portrayals of mental illness are harmful to everyone who consumes that media, and represent a dangerous phenomenon that must be paid close attention to. It's time to call out the misrepresentation of mental illness in media, and recognize our responsibility to become more conscious consumers of media as a whole, especially when mental illness is involved.

Today, there is an excess of media that uses mental illness as a focus for entertainment, whether it's a television series on Netflix, or a viral trend on TikTok. And the primary target for this media? Perhaps the most impressionable audience there is: teenagers and young adults.

"I worry about the commodification of [mental illness], specifically with certain mental illnesses that might skew people's perception of what that mental illness is," said Dave Hawley, a social studies teacher at ORHS. "There's a problem with how folks

romanticize certain pieces of mental illness. When you see [mental illness] in the media, it's for consumption, and I wrestle with that because mental illness is very real, and how we treat it needs to be very specific and very honest and accurate."

It's clear that many forms of media warp the idea of what mental illness should be in the minds of those who con-

sume said media. This is especially harmful to people who have already been diagnosed and are living with mental illnesses, as these portrayals serve as a kind of twisted version of what about 1 in 5 adults deal with every year, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. In this media, more often than not, mental illness is either demonized or romanticized, both being extremely detrimental to those who consume it. In many crime shows, individuals with mental illness are stuffed into the role of villain and are hauled off in handcuffs at the end of the episode, with their struggles pinned as a dangerous deviance rather than a crisis that should be dealt with meaningfully. A recent and glaring example of this is the 2019 film *Joker*, which received international recognition. The plotline of the movie relies on the severe mental illness of the main character, and how it led him to commit brutal acts of violence. It's true that symptoms of mental illness can sometimes manifest as anger and violence, but to solely emphasize that and not

the other aspects of the mental illness at hand severely misrepresent those who may have those struggles or convey the message that it's not possible to get help.

Alternately, some shows or social media trends give off the subliminal message that it's mysterious or cool to suffer from a mental illness, which is where the problem of romanticization comes in. *13 Reasons Why* is an example of this, in which a young girl not only takes her own life after experiencing horrific bullying but blames various peers of hers for her death through a series of recorded tapes. In fact, after the release of *13 Reasons Why*, there were higher rates of suicide and self-harm among the show's young viewers, with an increase in 28.9% among children 10 to 17, according to an April 2017 study sponsored by the Na-



tional Institute of Mental Health.

Other television series, such as *American Horror Story (AHS)*, send the message to its viewers that there's something beautiful about suffering from mental illness, that it's a dramatic experience that draws attention and intrigue. In *AHS*, people with various mental illnesses are painted as both villains and heroes, whose struggles are used more as a plot point than an opportunity to shine a light on the facts. To market these themes to young people who, in many cases, are trying to be seen and heard in a world that often drowns them out, has a lasting impact.

"The media always overplays [mental illness] which makes it really harmful because people don't realize the actual, harmful effects of the mental illness that a character is portraying," said Waverly Oake ('23). It's inevitable that the media provides a pseudo-education for many consumers. For example, the rise in popularity of shows like *CSI* have resulted in juries

having unrealistic expectations for evidence presented in criminal cases or using incorrect terminology like they have been educated in the field of criminal justice, which have both been detrimental, according to the National Institute of Justice.

Shows such as *AHS* and *13 Reasons Why* are just some of many that show how damaging media portrayals of mental illness can be. It's clear that even in the age of political correctness, there needs to be a dialogue shift in the media, so diagnoses like "ADHD" and "OCD" are not tossed around so flippantly. This will be hard. I often find myself using words like "crazy" and "depressed" in situations in which that terminology is inappropriate; the former being a derogatory word to refer to those with mental illness and the latter being a clinical diagnosis, not a temporary feeling of sadness. This is absolutely a habit I have developed through my consumption of media. But through continued personal accountability, and hopefully, a culture change in the way the media presents mental illness, this problem can be mitigated. Accurate and thoughtful portrayals of mental illness in the media are so important, and are arguably as helpful as bad portrayals are detrimental.

"I think it's so important for there to be visibility [in the media] about different mental illnesses," said Lippmann. "But we want to make sure that these portrayals are accurate, that it's not just someone saying they have OCD because they like to keep all their pencils straight. I would really like to see genuine portrayals of what different mental illnesses look like in the media so that people can feel comfortable talking about their own experiences."

It's clear that we cannot easily change the way the media portrays mental illness. This has been a problem reflected over decades. "If you look back to the 90s, there were ads for *Friends* that depicted the three women [main characters of the sitcom] and it said 'Cool anorexic chicks,' so it was romanticizing anorexia and people living with anorexia," said Tessa Lippmann ('21). "[The billboard] completely diminished the severity of this mental illness and completely ignored the serious health risk and serious struggles that people go through that struggle with anorexia."

Lippmann's example shows just how much the media has

changed its tune in terms of mental illness in the past few decades: whereas mental illness started as more of a flippant joke for media, it has turned into a major consumerist focus in recent years. Both sides of the spectrum have negative implications, however, even though the destigmatization of mental illness as a whole has had positive effects as well. However, even though we more open to talking about mental illness in the media, this has resulted in media companies feeling more comfortable about turning these issues into plastic, Hollywoodized versions for profit.

So what are we to do? Even though this misrepresentation of mental illness has been a generational phenomenon, we can learn to shift our consumption in order to make sure that we are

taking care of our own emotional and mental wellbeing, as well as providing a positive example for the younger and more impressionable among us.

"I would suggest that you appreciate that this is a battle beyond you," said Hawley. "It's

beyond me. I think what you can do, to the best of your ability, is to limit your consumption. That's an easy sentence to say. The nasty reality is that all the tech companies have utilized the best psychology available from the best doctors from the best institutions, and they're utilizing all this information that we've learned about the human psyche to capitalize on your attention."

While this is sound advice, the reality is that cutting back on media consumption, especially for the average teenager, is a difficult task. If you have the willpower, great. You have my respect. But if you can't seem to stop binging on Netflix, there are a few things you can do to consume selectively in terms of portrayals of mental illness.

"Do research," advised Lippmann. "There's a lot of websites that will actually talk about what are accurate representations of mental illness in the media. You can look into who the directors are, who the writers are, to see if any of them have actually lived with this mental illness and if they haven't and there's no information about what organizations they're working with, then that's a pretty good indicator that it may not be a realistic representation of that mental illness."

I personally like to use sites such as CommonSenseMedia that, while designed for parents, gives important information of the material covered in various shows, movies, and video games, so that you're not left guessing as to how mental illness is dealt with in them, if at all.

So the next time you switch on your television or open up a social media app, remember to be a careful consumer of media that deals with mental illness, and don't fall prey to poor representation. Take the time to educate yourself and others about what media discusses mental illness in a healthy and accurate way... the more people focus on that kind of representation, the fewer business shows like *13 Reasons Why* and *AHS* will get, hopefully sparking some real, cultural change as to how we deal with mental illness in the media.

-Ella Gianino 

Freeing the Stigma: Why we Should All be Feminists

When some think of a feminist, the unflattering image of a hysterical, blue-haired, overly-emotional, man-bashing, hateful woman might surface in their minds. While considering this figure, the argument that we should all embrace feminism seems absurd. But before we commit to judgement, we should ask ourselves, is that really who a feminist is?

Put simply, a feminist is a person who supports feminism, a movement that strives to achieve social, political, and economic equality among the sexes. Where issues such as the gender wage gap, domestic violence, and reproductive rights exist, feminism works towards resolving them. Though this is the widely accepted definition of the movement, everyone has different interpretations of what it means specifically for them.

To me, feminism embodies a form of empowerment and support for women, and advocates for equal opportunity for men and women. I outwardly identify as a feminist. However, I clearly don't have colorful hair and I don't consider myself to be hateful, overly-emotional, or hysterical; so why are people so afraid to call themselves feminists? The simple fact is that we should all be feminists. We should all support and promote gender equality because it contributes to a more just and ethically sound society.

Despite the movement's positive intentions, feminism has been shown in a negative light by our generation and those of the past. Especially in high school, the word seems to be used mockingly, as if believing in equality of the sexes is something that should be socially looked down upon. But oftentimes, the agitator is not referring to the goal of the feminist movement at all, but rather to the classic stereotype associated with the feminist; the picture painted of an angry and hysterical woman. "Because of [that] negative association, I think sometimes people may not fully understand what it means to be a feminist," said Jane Stapleton, UNH Women's Studies Professor and Co-Director of the Prevention Innovations Research Center. There is an apparent stigma surrounding the word and its intentions, not just at ORHS, but in society as a whole.

But the term "feminist" is not new, so how did we arrive at a place where it's so stigmatized? Feminism itself actually emerged in the early 1900s and carried through the suffrage movement, where women began to step forward and away from their traditional roles and stereotypes. Many did so loudly through actions such as the burning of bras at the Miss America protests, coining the term "radical feminist," with the hope of attracting attention to

the movement; but the attention they received was often negative. Decades later, society still looks at feminism unfavorably, even with the acknowledgement of their monumental role in advancing women's rights. It's our job to recognize the stigma around feminism and educate ourselves on what it truly means to be a feminist.



First, the stereotype of a feminist does not accurately reflect the average member of the movement. This stigmatized image of a feminist that we may think of comes from extremists that have unintentionally derailed the movement. Some women mislabel themselves as feminists while advocating for radical ideas such as misandry, the belief that women should be

superior to men and have a prejudice against them. Yes, they may identify as part of the movement, but they are by no means representative of every other feminist. To generalize this in such a way is analogous to choosing a student at random and assuming

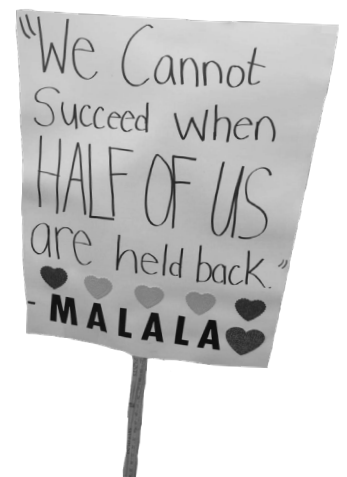
“The whole point of the movement is equality.”

that every other student shares the same beliefs and ideas about the high school they attend. This is obviously not the case, as is with feminists. By doing our part to eliminate this stigmatized stereotype, it would lead

to fewer people shying away from the word feminist and more people recognizing the value in advocating for gender equality.

Social media exacerbates this misrepresentation by highlighting exactly what we, as teenagers, want to see- entertainment. It's humorous to see videos of angry women who shout strange words and express radical beliefs; but it also negatively affects the movement. "The way we portray feminism in such a bad light can be very harmful and even detrimental to the cause because it creates so much opposition," said Tim Udomprasert ('22), "it's weaponized when people misunderstand it." We, as consumers of social media, should aim to give more attention to sources and accounts that promote true feminist ideas to allow others to understand its actual goals.

Especially on video social platforms such as TikTok, I find that it's not uncommon to stumble upon accounts



where people who identify as feminists say the phrase, “I hate all men,” referring to an experience they may have had. This has led to the stigma that feminism is simply an organization of women who enjoy bashing and complaining about men. Samantha Ble (‘22) explained that “if you are a true feminist, you shouldn’t be bashing either gender for simply being that gender. You shouldn’t judge a person on their biological contents, but rather the content of their character.” It is absolutely true that the core value of feminism is equality for all on the basis of sex, so the respect goes both ways. The commercial feminists that criticize a man because of his own gender is not representative of the movement. We should all aim to respect those around us, which is a major goal that the feminist movement advocates towards.

This leads into the next stigma that surrounds the goals of the movement itself. Feminism is often equated with and mistaken for

recognize this significant difference in pay. By joining the feminist movement now, we can do our part to ensure that women in our generation and those to come are able to experience equal pay for equal work. The wage gap is just one of many inequalities that feminism aims to seek justice for; issues such as domestic violence, childcare inequity, and rape culture are actively spoken out against by feminists, as well.

So, what can we do to further the movement in its aim to achieve gender equality? The first step is to educate yourself and others about the movement. There are many opportunities to get involved in learning about women’s issues at ORHS, including the Women’s Rights club and the Women’s Literature elective. In the Women’s Rights club run by Elise Wollheim and Evy Ashburner, there are thoughtful discussions about issues surrounding women and society, along with many opportunities to get involved in

“If you believe that men and women should be equal, then you are a feminist, whether you are conscious of it or not.”

misandry. “That seems really counterintuitive because the whole point of the movement is equality,” said Shauna Horsley, Women’s Literature teacher at ORHS. By no means is there any intention in the feminist movement to belittle men or take their power away; we are simply striving for equality.

“There’s this antiquated stereotype behind feminism that it’s only for women and I think that’s the biggest reason that many people, not just men, don’t want to identify as a feminist,” said Ble. I believe that this stigma and confusion is due largely in part to the “fem” prefix on the word. Many think that the prefix indicates that involvement in the movement is exclusive to women, but it actually implies that women are the target gender to raise to the same platform as men. Anyone who supports gender equality and equal opportunity may and should identify as a feminist. By doing so, you can show that you’re an ally to the movement and its goals.

Another common misconception that I’ve heard from my peers is the belief is that women are already equal to men; so why is feminism even necessary in this day and age? This question is formed by the fact that “it’s not always obvious at face value that women don’t have equal rights already,” said Ble. One of the biggest issues that feminism advocates for is the eradication of the gender wage gap. Although it’s illegal to discriminate on the basis of sex, working women in New Hampshire make 74 cents for every one dollar a man earns, according to “NH’s Gender Pay Gap” by Business New Hampshire. Shockingly, this is even less than the national average, which is 82 cents for every one dollar, according to the United States Census Bureau. As more women join the workforce, more of us will begin to

state and national events. Horsley mentioned that “within the community, there are definitely ways to get involved with [the movement]. Volunteering at women’s shelters or doing that kind of community service around women’s issues would be a great place to start.”

We should all be feminists because we should all believe in gender equality. “Anyone can be a feminist and everyone should

be a feminist. If you believe that men and women should be equal, then you are a feminist, whether you are conscious of it or not,” said Natalie Lessard (‘22). By joining the feminist movement, you contribute to the equality of not only our generation of women, but for the future generations to come.

Online resources to learn more about the feminist movement:

<https://now.org>
<https://feminist.org>
<https://www.awid.org>
<https://www.heforshe.org/en/movement>
<https://interactive.unwomen.org/multi-media/timeline/womenunite/en/index.html#/>



- Laura Slama **M**

Photos by Meera Mahadevan

The Benefits of Snail Mail

When I was in elementary school, I had a penpal. It didn't last for very long, but I remember the feeling of excitement that would take over when I received her letter in the mail; it was like Christmas morning.

While pen and paper were the main form of long distance communication for over one thousand years, penpalling officially began in the 1930s. Penpalling is the act of writing letters to someone, usually that you've never met, and most often someone that lives in a different country. Having a pen pal offers so many benefits including making new friends and connections, introducing you to travel opportunities, and changing your perspective. Don't miss out on an opportunity that has the potential to change your life.

"People should have pen pals because they are an outlet for a friendship which can bridge two cultures and ways of life," said Carly Anderson ('21). Throughout the years, Anderson has had multiple penpals, one of which she still keeps in touch with. "My lasting penpal I have is from Vallentuna, Sweden," said Anderson.

Eight years ago, Anderson met Elvira Hedström at a hotel resort in Hawai'i. The two have been penpalling ever since. "My favorite part of having a penpal is getting to know someone from a different country and learn about their experiences as they grow up, how they learn English and experience what I have experienced but in different ways. I also love having a friend who I can talk to through a different medium than most friends."

You'd think that with this new age of technology, penpalling would be a dying art. However it's quite the opposite. With the COVID-19 pandemic, people have been searching for ways to connect with others and occupy their time, and penpalling satisfies both. Global Penfriends, a website that connects people of all ages across the world to help them find a pen pal, currently has over 70,000 users, and there are facebook groups with over 30,000 people. An article by Brittany Wong for Huffpost, argues that "There's Never Been a Better Time to Have a Pen Pal."

Recently, I started penpalling with a girl in England. I'm not kidding when I say I spent weeks preparing my first letter to be sent. I went all out and made sure that no detail went overlooked. It's important to me to note that everything, from the color of the ink I used to write the letter to the guitar pick I included in the "goodie bag," was color coordinated.

The reason I put so much effort into my letter is because penpalling is more than just sending a letter nowadays, it's become an art form. While there's no rules as to how you should go about penpalling, and you can certainly send a letter with nothing else to it, penpalling has become about more than writing a letter. People include songs they've been listening to, Q&A's, art pieces they've made, and even gifts for the other person such as stationary and stickers, all wrapped up in a beautifully orchestrated package.

Creating something like this takes a lot of time. Why spend so much time and effort into making something so detailed when you could just send a text, you may ask? Think about how you feel when a package arrives in the mail. You get pretty excited, right? It doesn't matter even what it is for you to get excited and feel special that something has arrived specifically for you. Now imagine that package is from a friend and not only contains a letter detailing

what they've been up to, but also recommendations of new songs to listen to, books to read, movies to watch, and recipes to try. That feeling is what penpalling is all about. You don't feel that way when you receive a text message. And besides, you most likely need a break from staring at a screen. Doing something creative is a great way to spend time away from your phone, and writing about our lives is more beneficial than you might have thought.

ORHS Counselor Kim Cassamas said that the benefits of writing down our personal experiences include "staying in touch with where you are at that moment. It gives you a lot of perspective and the assurance that you do grow and learn skills." If you journal, you'll know that writing down your emotions can be cathartic. Any expression of emotion is extremely beneficial; penpalling is great because it assures you that someone is willing and interested to listen to what's going on in your life.

Anderson talked about how penpalling has expanded her worldview and allowed her to express herself. "[Elvira] has given me a lot of insight into a different community as she shares her day to day life with me. Most recently we talked about how each of our countries were handling the coronavirus pandemic, so I learned that they had less restrictions than we did when it came to group gatherings and social health protocols and we both expressed our frustrations with how each of the government systems were handling the pandemic."

If you have a pen pal that lives in a country where the main language is one that you don't speak, it's a great opportunity for you to learn a new language. As a kid, Anderson was able to pick up some Swedish while communicating with Hedström. "I have learned a few words in Swedish because at the beginning of our penpalling she knew limited English so she would write the letter in Swedish, and her mom would Google translate it for me. I would read through the translation in addition to the Swedish letter trying to see what I could make out from what she had written."

Along with potentially helping you learn languages, penpalling gives you a great opportunity to practice your writing skills. "I remember before I would send my letter to Elvira, I would go over the grammar and spelling with my parents so that they would help me catch any mistakes I had so it wouldn't be confusing for her as she tried to read it as it was her second language," said Anderson.

If you're nit picky or care about the quality of your work, penpalling can be very time consuming. And depending on how far away your pen pal lives, the wait for a letter in return may take weeks. "One of the drawbacks to having a traditional penpal is the waiting for the letter in return, but that is part of the experience of having a penpal as well," said Anderson. "I can't think of any other reasons why having a penpal would be a bad experience to have."

Penpalling can bring a lot of joy into your life, and make you feel less alone. It expands your worldview and gives you something to look forward to. If you're interested in finding a penpal but don't know where to look, check out <https://www.globalpenfriends.com>.

- Isabella Crocco 



A Freshman's Guide to ORHS

From the Class of '21 to the Class of '25

Freshman year at Oyster River: we seniors remember it as a time occupied by wandering around the building trying to find our classes, trying to adjust to the academic rigor, and tiptoeing gingerly around the senior core.

But this year looks very different for you, the class of '24. Instead of walking through the doors each morning, textbooks in hand, your morning routine involves logging into a computer, barred from exploring Oyster River's hallways of classrooms and offices due to the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic. While in-person learning has begun to gradually phase back in, you are suddenly finding yourself with a little under a semester to become acquainted with ORHS, not to mention the significant changes that have been made to the school day in order to prevent the spread of the virus. Students are expected to wear masks, stay six feet apart, and follow specific traffic patterns along the hallways, which hardly makes for a "normal" freshman experience.

This is why a handful of ORHS seniors gave me their best advice to share with you. I hope this can serve as a guide for not only your class, but for future freshmen at Oyster River who are looking for some good, old-fashioned senior advice.

GETTING INVOLVED

Being in a new school is awkward. Trust me, I get it. It might seem like the hardest thing in the world to jump right into all of the extracurriculars that ORHS has to offer, but it's arguably one of the best things you can do as an underclassman. Libby Cavanaugh ('21) emphasized this as one of the most important steps in getting to know ORHS.

"Get involved!" encouraged Cavanaugh, who plays varsity field hockey and manages the boys' lacrosse team. "Do sports or clubs that you are interested in. It helps you make friends!"

There are simply so many options for extracurriculars at ORHS that it's impossible not to find one that piques your interest. Some strong programs include Best Buddies, SALT (Student Athlete Leadership Team), the spring musical, Sustainability Club, and the Diverse Student Union. Plus, if you're like me and find yourself lacking in the areas of singing and dancing but would still like to support the program, make sure to go to the musicals and any other spectator event that you find interesting. Nothing quite matches the energy of being in the stands of a playoff hockey game or chanting at a soccer match. Whatever you choose to participate in, it's definitely better to try lots of things your freshman and sophomore years than make it to your senior year feeling like you missed out.

"I didn't get involved in clubs or athletics until pretty recently, which I regret," admitted Michael Szymanski ('21). However, Szymanski joined the boys' varsity hockey team for his senior season and had a great run, making it to the semifinal match. "I think that joining a high school sports team gives you the ability to connect socially with your peers outside of the classroom," Szymanski said. "Although I've never played sports with the high school hockey team before this year, I have grown up with all these kids

so it's been an amazing experience teaming up with them."

I personally know the impact that being on a sports team can have on your assimilation to high school life. As a freshman on the soccer team, it was a fantastic (albeit stressful!) experience to train and play with upperclassmen. We have even established a buddy system of sorts on the team, wherein seniors can partner with incoming freshmen to be a resource throughout the school day. Sports teams and clubs alike can provide a supportive family that you can rely on for any questions you may have. Luckily, ORHS has a wide range of clubs and activities to choose from, which you can read all about in the Bobcat Corner group on Schoology, under the Resources tab.

CLASSES TO TAKE

One of the most fun parts of high school academics is choosing your electives. And, luckily for you, Oyster River has a unique menu available, with everything from Bake Shop, to Yoga and Mindfulness, to World Drumming.

"Take a lot of art classes," recommended Szymanski. "I think the art room has been one of the best experiences I've had at ORHS, and I never thought I'd say that... I think that [art classes] are something really fun that everyone should experience."

Other classes that seniors emphasized as highlights of their time at ORHS are African American History and Women's Literature.



The Sustainability Club is just one of the fantastic extracurriculars that ORHS has to offer!

"I really liked African American History and I think that's a super important class, and Women's Lit, too," said Mia Hricz ('21). "Those were two of the most impactful classes I've taken. I just think they give unique perspectives. Even if you're not a woman, I think it's great to take Women's Lit. And African American History: I feel like I've learned so much in that class that has stuck with me... whenever I see things on TV or on social media, I think back to that class and start making those connections again."

For me, that impactful class was AP US History. That class showed me that my love for history ran deeper than I thought, and even though I was initially intimidated by the advanced status of the class, it quickly became the highlight of my day (plus Mrs. VanDyke is the best, so make sure to swing by at some point and introduce yourself!).

The bottom line, however, is making sure you're taking classes that you're excited about and could benefit from, even if they seem out of your comfort zone.

"I kind of regret not taking certain classes because I thought they would be too hard, like AP Bio, but looking back, I really wanted to take it," said Hricz.

Hricz is right, but it's important to differentiate between classes that are challenging in a positive, growth-oriented way, and classes that are going to cause you an unhealthy amount of stress.

"I think that some students feel the need to take every single class that is the quote-unquote accelerated class, they're so focused on taking all the APs they can take... and that's good, if you can handle that," said Szymanski. "But I think some students feel the need to take every single class that is the quote-unquote accelerated class, they're so focused on taking all the APs they can take... and that's good, if you can handle that," said Szymanski. "But I think some students feel pressure to take on that course load when they can't handle it, especially if they have a lot going on outside of their school day. I think that everyone's under the impression that they need to take these classes to get to a higher education, when in reality that's not even close to true. When some students go down that path, they stretch themselves really thin, and by the end of their high school career it becomes way too much, emotionally and mentally."

The goal here is to find a balance between Hricz's and Szymanski's points. Make sure that you're not avoiding classes because you're intimidated by them, but also take stock of what you can handle. Burnout is real and it's better to pull a good grade in a more basic class than to tank in an AP that's out of your league academically. Trust me, I know what it's like to constantly feel panic rising in your chest when you don't understand any of your assignments, or getting yet another subpar test grade despite spending hours poring over your notes. But I also know the happiness of thriving in a course I love, when I feel empowered to

dive deeper into the material and go beyond the assignment rubrics.

Taking classes that push the limits of your ability and encourage your curiosity are not only great for your mental growth but for setting you up for life post-high school. Colleges like to see a challenging course load on your transcript, but only if you can keep up with it. Try not to get too caught up in what you think colleges want to see, however. High school is a great time to test your limits and find your passions, so be sure to challenge yourself but also recognize when you're in over your head. Try fun electives and explore lots of different subject areas, because you never know where your next passion could be hiding! Your counselor can be a great resource for this, so don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or to schedule a meeting!

THE LOWDOWN ON GRADES

"Looking back, the one thing I would tell myself to do differently is that your freshman grades are really important," said Lydia Kurtiak ('21). "I think that's not really drilled into our heads, just because we're new high schoolers and they don't want to stress us out too bad, but [freshman grades] are really the foundation

of your GPA. Come junior year, you're applying to colleges and you realize that you should've tried harder, because it's really hard to change your GPA once it's established."

This is true. Especially if your goal is to attend a four-year college (which I know is weird to think about your freshman year), your grades are an important component of your student profile that admission reps look at. Of course, this all depends on what your plans are post-graduation — every college emphasizes GPA differently — but it's a safe

bet to make sure you're doing well, grade-wise. Extracurricular involvement, community service, and other things are still important to your applications come senior year, but you definitely don't want to ignore those numbers you see in PowerSchool. At the end of the day, make sure you're keeping up with and doing well on your coursework. Grades certainly aren't everything but you want to be proud of what you're turning in!

"Really make sure that you understand what's going on in your classes," Kurtiak summarized. "I know it's new and it's sometimes scary to ask teachers that you don't know [for help] in a new environment, but don't be afraid to ask for help and just really focus on your classes."

Cavanaugh agreed. "Get to know your teachers," she recommended. "It's harder to fail if you feel comfortable asking your teacher for help."

Asking for help is an essential part of getting good grades and getting to know your teachers. Don't be afraid to ask questions in class. The reality is that most likely, you'll understand the material better and your teacher and classmates will admire your desire



Athletics are where many students find their home away from home.

to succeed. Also, some of your classmates could have the same question as you but be too scared to ask... by asking questions you could be inadvertently helping those around you!

One thing that ORHS offers that you should take full advantage of is FLEX time. Scheduled out as a block after Advisory, FLEX time is an opportunity to see your teachers, make up work, or just quietly do homework.

"I would definitely recommend that freshmen use FLEX time to their advantage," said Ellis Tonkin ('21). "I feel like I often didn't use my time well enough throughout high school, just because I'd rather have been relaxing than scheduling time with teachers."

DON'T TAKE IT FOR GRANTED

If there's anything the class of '21 understands, it's the fact that everything you take for granted could be gone in an instant. We grew up imagining having proms and graduations of our own, thinking that we knew what to expect. We couldn't have been more wrong. We never imagined that there would be a time when we would not be allowed to learn in the building, that we would start to miss those long days of walking from classroom to classroom instead of logging onto Teams calls.

"Don't take for granted any of the small moments with friends or peers or teachers," said Yoder. "I think I definitely learned, with school being remote for such a long time, that it's important to cherish the moments with your friends and teachers in-person."

It's definitely a strange phenomenon, to look back on moments that may have seemed inconsequential then, that seem so special now. For me, it's remembering those boisterous, whole-class activities such as Carnival in Spanish class or Kahoot in math.

It's wishing I could still meet up with friends while walking through the hallways, or even feeling nostalgic about waiting awkwardly in the cafeteria line. The best advice we can give you as the senior class is to recognize those moments and live them to the fullest, without any regrets or reservations.

FINAL WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Entering high school can be a nerve-wracking experience. Some kids jump in like they were born for it, while others take a little longer to adjust. Whichever boat you may be in, remember that everyone acclimates in their own way and finds a foothold somewhere.

"High school is tough for everyone in their own ways," said Cavanaugh. "Try to look at this portion of your life as a learning experience. This is your time to learn about yourself."

Take advantage of the wide range of electives to try something new and to explore your interests. With every new curriculum and teacher comes a fresh perspective, and you never know when you'll find something that makes a lasting impact on you.

"Not being afraid to put yourself out there is really important," said Yoder, "because it's how you make some of your best memories."

Be bold. Boldness reaps rewards that may not be immediately obvious to you, but by the time you're a wizened elder like us, you'll look back and feel so proud of your maturity and for taking charge of your education. You'll be able to walk across the stage at a graduation of your own, and truly feel you've crushed this thing called high school... and that's the best feeling in the world.

-Ella Gianino **M**

*Images from Madla
Walsh & Sus Club*



The empty senior core is a stark reminder of how quickly everything you take for granted can change.

Atlantic White Sharks

What the Return of an Apex Predator Means for Coastal Communities

When it's a cold summer day on the beach, I'll stand in front of my lifeguard post and plant my feet in the sand. With no patrons in sight, I feel comfortable enough to bundle up in my red hoodie and sweatpants because the chance I'd have to strip down and sprint into the water to help someone is minimal. On slow days like these I spend a lot of my time thinking about different rescue scenarios and muttering radio calls to myself to perfect my communication. One radio call I've never made, and never hope to make, is for a shark attack.

Though New Hampshire's coastline is well within white sharks range, there's never been a documented attack in our state's history. This is because Hampton, which is our most popular beach, is clear, shallow and doesn't hold a permanent seal colony. All these factors lead to unfavorable hunting conditions. Even knowing these facts, sharks are always in the back of my mind when I'm in the water. They may not be hunting, but they are definitely nearby. After all, it's the ocean.

Last July, Maine had its first ever fatal shark attack. In the past decade, incredible numbers of white sharks have returned to the New England coast. This undeniable ecological triumph is an important milestone in marine conservation, but the reintroduction of this apex predator presents many challenges. As part of a coastal community, it's important that we understand why white sharks are vital to the health of our ecosystem and that we know how to successfully cohabitate with their growing population.

To fully appreciate the white shark restoration in New England, we must first understand why their population declined. Historically, white sharks and seals (their main source of food) had thrived in the region. In fact, both species were so plentiful that Henry David Thoreau wrote about them in Cape Cod, one of his many famous literary works. He stated that the locals "would not bathe there for any sum" due to the amount of sharks in the water. For a period of time, sharks and humans seemed to coexist, but as is a recurring theme in American history, the ignorance and greed of European settlers soon destroyed this cohabitation.

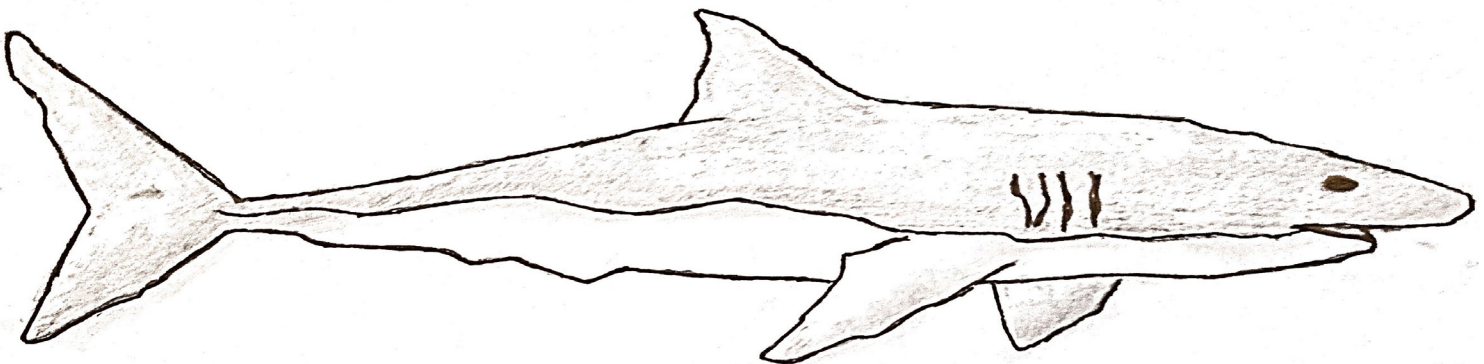
As settlers began to overfish the area in the late 1700's, they blamed the decline of their profit on the white sharks and seals. The fishing industry lobbied for legislation that placed a flesh bounty on seals. Its purpose was to encourage the culling of not only the seal population, but decreasing the white shark's food supply as well. According to a 2009 publication from the University of Southern Maine, hunters in Massachusetts and Maine were paid five dollars (approximately \$104.37 today)

for every seal nose or tail that they could produce. This bounty led to a near extinction of seals on the Cape and an absence of sharks in the area. Over one hundred years later, the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 was passed, and the population of seals in New England began to rebound.

Subsequently, as the numbers of seals increased, so did the number of white sharks returning to the Gulf of Maine in the summer. This inevitably increased encounters with humans. In 2018, Massachusetts had its first fatal shark attack in 70 years, and as mentioned earlier, Maine's first attack occurred just last summer off of Bailey Island. While these kinds of attacks are exceedingly rare, they provide an absolute field day for the East Coast press. Shark attack stories always seem to fascinate the public, and for good reason. White Sharks are one of evolution's greatest success stories and have changed little in the last 400 million years. White sharks can reach speeds of 35 mph and are armed with up to 7 rows of razor sharp teeth.

"A healthy population of white sharks is a good indicator that the Gulf of Maine's ecosystem is robust and returning to a natural state"

The Jaws franchise, which earned \$800 million dollars in box office sales worldwide, featured white sharks, and sharks in general, as soulless killers. Jaws rendered an entire generation terrified of sharks and marine predators to such an extent that Peter Benchley, the author of the original book that inspired the movie, regretted the premise of the franchise and



dedicated the rest of his life to ocean conservation.

Sharks' physical prowess serves as clickbait, but there's far more to them than just their brawn. Their brains are large and highly functioning in order to process the information coming in from their acute senses. They regularly outsmart seals and dolphins. Both species are thought of as being intelligent and social by the general public, and yet white sharks are able to successfully hunt them.

Sara Cathey has taught Oyster River's marine biology class for the last seven years and spoke a strong case for the important role sharks play in maintaining a stable ocean. "A healthy population of White Sharks is a good indicator that the Gulf of Maine ecosystem is robust and has returned to a more natural state, prior to humans interfering," said Cathey "Ecosystems are in constant flux. More food availability in one segment of a food web will impact all other areas of the food web."

Hans Morris, a senior guard at the New Hampshire State Beach Patrol has spent a lot of time learning about and diving with sharks. "As long as I can remember, my grandfather, my dad and my uncle have been fishing and spending a lot of time on the ocean," said Morris. "We always had a lot of respect for sharks and what they do for the ocean as apex predators." Morris' family hails from Newburyport and Plum Island in Massachusetts.

"I've gone diving with whites in Guadalupe Island. From what I've seen, they are very calm creatures when just cruising around," Morris continued. "Obviously they can be in that hunting mode, but when they aren't in that frame of mind, they are just docile creatures. I think it's really interesting to see that two sidedness in their own habitat, especially when media outlets portray them as killing machines."

During the summer, Morris and I spend a lot of time open water swimming with the Beach Patrol crew. "We accept the risk when we

go in the water" said Morris "It's important to remember that you're in the shark's habitat." Morris's respect for sharks is very similar to that of our neighbor's across the prairie: the West Coast. Despite having 34 shark attacks in the past twenty years, California, Oregon and Washington never seem to devote the same attention to these incidents as New England does. Native Californian surfers and bathers alike seem to understand the risk, and they don't let it deter them from getting in the water. Sharks just don't have the "fear factor" that they currently do on the East Coast. This is because White Sharks have been a constant presence in their waters, and since European settlers first made their way to the West Coast, there was never a culling of sharks and seals on par with that of New England's. Sharks remained in the ocean and people simply got used to them and accepted that they would have to share their beaches.

Even though it's a far cry from sunny California, the Gulf of Maine still has incredible numbers of beachgoers. The water here is very cold (with temperatures averaging around 50 F - 60 F in the summer). Many people use the water to surf, swim, spearfish, and boogie board. This past August, Karsten Sargent ('23) came in contact with a white shark while surfing at The Wall in Hampton, NH.

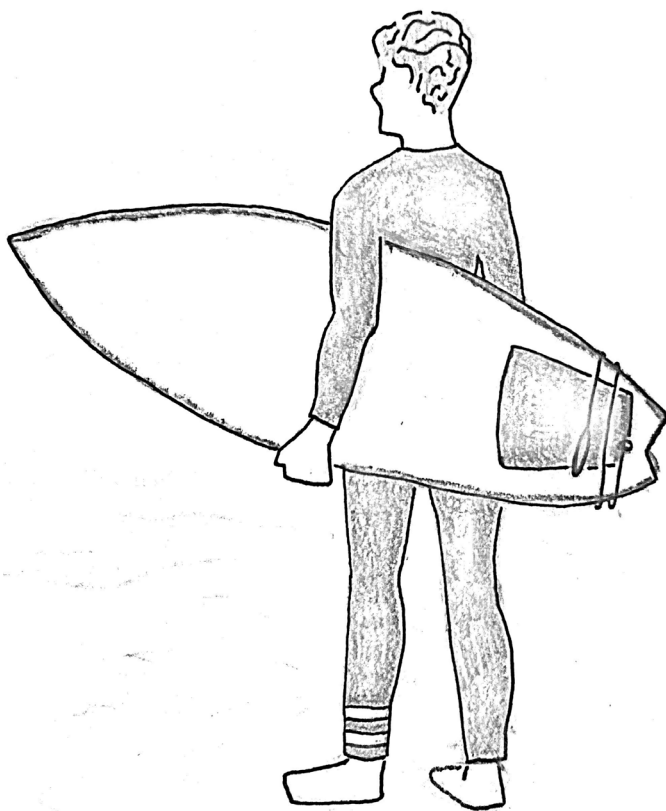
It was an average day at the Wall in terms of crowd size, and the waves were not exceptionally big. Sargent had just taken a wave down the line and was making his way through the breakers when he spotted the shark. "I wiped the water out of my eyes and there was just a dorsal fin sitting right next to me," said Sargent. "My first instinct was to just get out of the way."

For better or worse, sharks are ambush predators. This means that if you see one outright, odds are it's not hunting you. Sargent paddled back into shore and took a break before resuming his session. "I went back twenty minutes later a ways down the beach," Sargent continued. "Then I had to get out because the sun was setting." Sargent said that his encounter would absolutely not deter him from getting in the water in the future. Sharks are opportunistic predators and will target seals that are alone or injured. Surfing in a group like Sargent was doing is a good way to decrease the chances of an unsavory encounter.

This coming summer there are many ways to increase your shark knowledge. One quick and easy way would be to follow the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy on Instagram, and download their app called Sharktivity. The AWSC is a non-profit that researches white shark activity and improves public safety. AWSC developed Sharktivity for anyone to be able to track sharks on their phone and record sightings.

Wherever you are in New England, staying away from seals and large schools of fish is also very important. Sharks hunt these animals and it's best to keep your distance. Swimming in murky waters can also cause a shark to mistake you for a seal and will limit your own visibility. Avoid swimming at dawn and dusk as well, as these are usually when sharks are most active. Staying vigilant is also the easiest way to mitigate the risk of an encounter. "You always have to keep an eye out when you're in a natural place," said Morris. "If I was in the woods I'd always have an eye out for a bear. It's kinda the same thing. Sure you don't have to think about it all the time, but you're in their home."

-Owen Fleischer **M**



Oyster River Climbing

For some, the Coronavirus pandemic has prevented people from doing the things they love. For the Oyster River Climbing group, it has given them the opportunity to discover new activities.

Oyster River Climbing is a new community of local students that began climbing regularly just this past summer. This spring, they're starting an official school club, offered to anybody interested in joining. Climbing, both indoor on a rock wall or outdoors on actual boulders, is an activity that benefits both mental and physical health, but one of the best parts about it is the community aspect.

Silas Twickler ('21), who helped start the club with Oyster River English teacher Shawn Kelly, didn't start climbing until last August. "I started climbing at the Wiswall boulder that's by my house, and just spent a few hours doing some easy climbs," said Twickler. Once he gained some interest, he got some friends involved.

Aidan Janetos ('21), a friend of Twickler, began roughly a month later, when he went to Indoor Ascent, an indoor climbing gym in Dover, NH. Now, both Twickler and Janetos are regulars. "I probably climb 2-4 times a week either at Indoor Ascent or outside at Pawtuckaway if weather is permitting," said Janetos.

After months of climbing with each other, the community wants to expand and share their passion with other students who are interested. Twickler hopes that the club will "build a wider community of climbers within Oyster River, as well as a place for people to get out and socialize during the pandemic." They hope to introduce the activity to others who have not yet tried it.

While this will allow students to get out and explore a new activity, as well as be able to socialize with others in a small community setting, they hope they'll also be able to add a competitive element. "I hope to build a team of climbers that hopefully will compete in some events and hopefully have the club contin-



cued on the moment and the holds ahead of you. While climbing, all your stress fades away because if you stop to think about what you were stressing about, odds are, you're falling off the wall," said Twickler.

Janetos has had a similar experience, saying, "during quarantine, climbing has given me escape from a normal routine. I've found that after I climb I leave happier and with more energy

"There's so many aspects of it I enjoy, from the people you meet, to the feeling of freedom, as well as the satisfaction after sending a project, or even the feeling you get after topping out a highball. If I had to choose a favorite, I'd probably say the process of bettering oneself, the serotonin from sending something you didn't dream you could do a few months ago is addicting,"

ue well after I'm out of high school," said Twickler.

Climbing regularly has been a huge mental boost for Twickler, especially during the pandemic. "When climbing you experience a flow state, where you are solely fo-

then I entered with."

Climbing can certainly be beneficial for one's mental health, but it also improves physical health. According to Adventure HQ, an indoor climbing gym in Florida, climbing can greatly improve physical coordination, flexibility, cardiovascular health

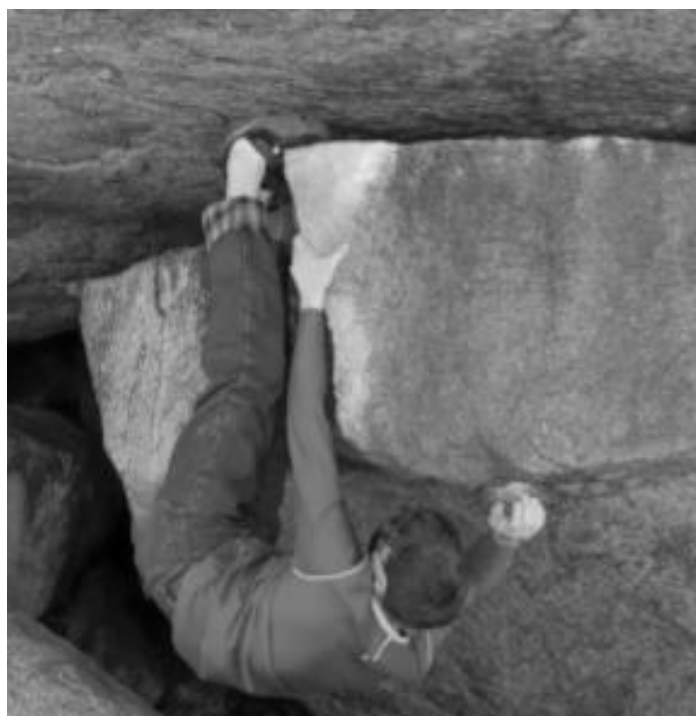
and physical strength. Forearm and finger strength are two of the biggest gains that one gets from climbing, as it takes a super strong grip to climb difficult routes.

While climbing is beneficial for both your mental and physical health, there are many other things that make it enjoyable. “There’s so many aspects of it I enjoy, from the people you meet, to the feeling of freedom, as well as the satisfaction after sending a project, or even the feeling you get after topping out a high-ball. If I had to choose a favorite, I’d probably say the process of bettering oneself, the serotonin from sending something you didn’t dream you could do a few months ago is addicting,” said Twickler.

Being able to improve is something most climbers really enjoy and focus a lot on. The difficulty on each route in an indoor climbing gym, as well as outdoor boulders are described using the “V-scale.” For example, the easiest climbs are V0 and V1, and it progressively gets harder, all the way to V16. Most climbers are constantly pushing themselves to complete harder routes, and set goals for themselves.

“When I started climbing I set an unrealistic goal of climbing V10 in my first year, I’m 7 months in and climb V7, and came extremely close to sending a V8 before it was taken down. I still hope to climb V10 in my first year. However, I’m still going to be stoked if I get even close,” said Twickler.

Many others, such as Janetos, focus more on enjoying the activity itself. “Personally I have certain goals on grades I want to climb by certain times, but in general, I honestly don’t really care too



boulders to climb. Currently, for indoor climbing, Indoor Ascent in Dover is the only indoor climbing gym on the Seacoast.

When asked why someone should consider climbing, Janetos said, “I encourage people to climb because I think it’s a great way to better mental and physical health while finding creative solu-

“When climbing you experience a flow state, where you are solely focused on the moment and the holds ahead of you. While climbing, all your stress fades away because if you stop to think about what you were stressing about, odds are, you’re falling off the wall”

much about the grades, I just really enjoy climbing.”

Before the club began, “Oyster River Climbing” got its start as an Instagram account, with 5 active members who would post photos and videos of themselves improving. The members include Twickler, Janetos, Aidan Covell (‘21), John Kell (‘21), and Corum Nichols (‘21). The account inspired many others, including myself, to go out and give climbing a try. Now, the account has over 100 followers and includes many videos showing huge improvement of the 5 climbers. If you’re interested in checking out the account, the username is @oysterriver_climbing.

During the winter, most climbers stay indoors. However as the weather starts to get warmer, innumerable opportunities arise. “I like climbing outside more, and would rather be at Pawtuckaway than Indoor Ascent,” said Twickler. There are many local spots, such as Patuckaway, Wiswall, and other smaller spots in Lee, that are enjoyable for climbers of all abilities. For those willing to make the drive, the White Mountains contains tons of different

tions to problems with your friends!”

Twickler added, “I encourage people to climb because it has helped me with everything. From making me be in the best shape of my life to being a great coping mechanism for stress, I think everyone or almost everyone can gain or learn something from climbing and I hope others will have the same experience that I did.”

If you are interested in joining the club, or just want to learn more information on climbing, contact Silas Twickler at 21twics@orcscsd.org, or Mr. Kelly at skelly@orcscsd.org.

-Alden Swiesz 
Images by Silas Twickler

Behind The Lens...

Whether they picked up a camera from a young age or developed this hobby amid the pandemic, Oyster River has many talented photographers. Every couple of weeks, I'll see new student photography accounts while scrolling through social media. Specifically, Instagram has become a platform for many ORHS photographers to showcase their work. These Instagram accounts were active especially throughout the pandemic and filled my feed with a variety of nature photos, candid, portraits, and more. Through every photo, I could see that each photographer had different strengths and interests, but they all had the ability to capture every moment beautifully. For some photographers, the pandemic has actually given them more opportunities to do photography and impacted their lives greatly. For others, photography shaped their life at a younger age. Either way, the continued effort of Oyster River's student photographers should be recognized, so continue reading for insight on how some student photographers began their journey and their advice for other aspiring photographers.

MADLA WALSH ('21)



Follow @picturesbymadla on instagram for more!

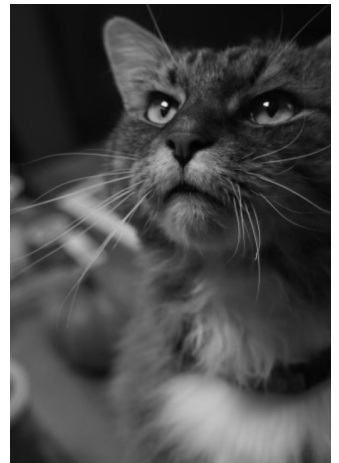
Madla Walsh ('21) explained that she's always been interested in photography. "As a kid, I think I've always liked photography but more in the sense that I had this tiny little film camera and a crappy camera...I'd always also take my mom's phone and take pictures." However, Walsh's interest peaked during her sophomore year of highschool and she eventually created an instagram dedicated to her photography. "I had all these pictures that I liked and I was proud of and I thought it would be cool to have a spot just for my photos."

Walsh continued this hobby and she explained that it's impacted her life. "Having one hobby that makes me happy [has impacted my life] and especially since it's photography, it motivates me to go outside and take pictures and taking pictures with people is a fun thing to do." Walsh continued, "[photography] also gives me the ability to stretch outside of what other people might see...like take my own perspective and view and show it to other people beyond just words."

As for Walsh's favorite type of photography, she's mostly done digital photography. However, she said, "I got a film camera and since then I've been really into film photography."

She continued to give her advice for those who wish to begin photography. "Aside from the cost of a camera, but you could always use your phone, it's pretty cheap to do...just go outside with some friends and challenge the way you see the world and look for things you probably wouldn't look for and photograph it."

JOHANNAH DEZIEL ('22)



Follow @pho.tosbyjo on Instagram for more!

Johannah Deziel ('22) grew up reading National Geographic and she explained how the magazine prompted her love for photography. "I've always loved looking at the photos in it...and when I was like six, I'd always be stealing my parent's camera but eventually I did get my own and I took portraits of my stuffed animals...I'd pretend it was picture day."

Growing up, Deziel explained the impact of photography on her life. "The [pictures] I've taken haven't [impacted my life] as much but looking at National Geographic I liked how you could get insight into other people's lives around the world...they showed me how everyone is kind of the same but everyone lives [their life] differently."

As Deziel continued her photography journey, she discovered what aspects of it she enjoyed the most. She said, "my favorite type of photography would be candid portraits because I just like capturing moments and people's emotions...I think street photography is also super cool just because it's interesting to document people's mundane and everyday life things without the edited aspect to it."

Deziel believes photography will play a large role in her life even when she's older. She said, "I really do want to travel, see the way other people live and capture it...I also want to continue making people feel confident which is something I like to do with my portraits."

She continued explaining why others should start taking photos. "Probably to just document your life and look back on it...it doesn't have to be serious, you can always just use your iphone or buy a disposable one."

MADEYLN MARTHOUSE ('23)



Follow @momentsbymadelyn & @madelynclairephotos on Instagram for more!

Madelyn Marthouse's ('23) love for photography started in her late middle school years. She said, "my mom had always been super into taking pictures of everything, and I started noticing it and appreciating it more around 7th grade." Since then, Marthouse followed her mother's footsteps and took photos of things she loved such as her friends, family, and nature.

Marthouse explained another reason she enjoys photography is because, "it made me feel more connected to what was around me...for example I've found my raging love for pictures of the ocean, sky, and moon- having all those moments caught on camera felt rewarding."

The pandemic has obviously had a huge impact on everyone. For Marthouse, it's had a positive impact on her photography. "During these hard times [COVID], I still had the opportunity to be at most school sporting events, which has been a gift...photography has impacted me in the sense that it has provided these opportunities for me," Marthouse continued. Marthouse's connection to things and people she photographs has also allowed her to create meaningful bonds with sports teams and players. Although sports photography is Marthouse's favorite type of photography, she said, "it's a challenge to get the action shots everyone wants... but I'm all for it, I love the rush of excitement I get when I take sports photos."

However, Marthouse doesn't limit herself to just sports photography. "I love many different types [of photography] for so many reasons...nature photography for the beauty, portrait photography for the connection I get to have with the person I'm taking pictures of...there's so many." Marthouse encourages others to start photography. She said, "it's something you can completely make your own...there's no limits, so make it however you want."

MARY JEONG ('23)



Follow @mjeongphotography on Instagram for more!

Mary Jeong ('23) explained that her passion for photography began as soon as she picked up a camera. "My first camera was my parent's old Canon Point-and-Shoot, which I experimented with for a photography camp in fourth grade and used all throughout middle school." Jeong started off by simply taking photos of her sisters and nature.

Two years ago, when she became more skilled in the art of photography, she invested in a nicer camera. "I enjoyed exploring and learning about all the different functions of my camera and lens," Jeong said. With this new camera, Jeong discovered her love for portrait photography. She said, "I love being able to capture each individual's uniqueness through a lens and having the ability to make one feel beautiful. It brings me so much joy to see my subjects see themselves from a new perspective when they look at the portraits I take."

Jeong continued explaining other aspects of photography she enjoys. "Besides actually taking the photos, my favorite part about photography is the editing. I have always loved editing, whether it's for photos or for videos. I find it so therapeutic and satisfying, and I truly believe that the editing is what makes a photo stand out and look really nice."

Jeong is planning on continuing photography in the future but simply as a hobby. In the near future, she said, "I plan on offering senior portraits for the upcoming class of 2022."

For anyone else interested in starting photography, Jeong gives her advice, "you just need a camera or a phone and something to shoot...I would just say to go for it and have fun."

- Bhavana Muppala 

Why Exercise is Helpful



After a long, tiring day of staring at a computer screen from home during the school day, many students at Oyster River High School work out at nearby gyms to get out of their house and relieve stress. Exercise, especially in a social environment, like a gym, can be vital to the mental and physical health of a student during the pandemic.

On March 16th, Oyster River High School students rushed out of the school in joy, thinking they were on a two week vacation. Little did they know their lives would change. Since the breakout of COVID-19 last year, students at ORHS have been required to partake in remote learning full-time or part-time. Traditions such as the prep rally and Mr. Bobcat have been cancelled, and student attendance for sporting events has been prohibited. High schoolers across the world have been affected physically, mentally, and socially. To cope with these changes, some have found a new home in the gym.

Prior to school, spring sports season, and many other things being cancelled, I felt like I was in a great place with myself. Once I heard the news that my high school baseball season was cancelled, I felt like I lost everything. I spent weeks looking for motivation and activities to pass time. Finally, I decided to workout in my basement. It helped me lift my mood and it made me feel good about myself for the first time in a while, so the next night I did it again. It became something for me that could relieve my stress at any point and would always lift my mood.

I've always been someone who's battled with weight and never been satisfied with myself. During freshman year I went to a

trainer and lost 36 pounds. With growth in height and returning to my old eating habits, I gained it all back. In October of last year I got back from a baseball tournament in Florida and stepped on the scale. I looked down and it said 200.5 lbs. I couldn't believe it. I stepped off and then back on, still 200.5 lbs. I knew at that point I was making a change in my life and I did. Now I'm currently 175 lbs, lifting the heaviest weight I ever have, and in the best shape of my life. Lifting and having healthy habits has made me a happier person every day of my life and it has made me proud of who I am.

The feeling of beating an old personal record or having a good workout on a day that I had no motivation is incomparable for me. It's a feeling of being on top of the world and knowing you can conquer whatever you set your mind to. I know I'm not going to be stronger than everyone, and I know I won't run the fastest, but that doesn't matter when I'm in the gym because I know it'll make me stronger, faster and healthier.

Lifting has not only improved my strength and athletics but also my overall health. Lifting has helped me with goal setting in and out of the gym, my diet, my sleep habits, and many more. I feel like I have become a much more goal oriented person ever since I started lifting and it helps me keep the practice of committing myself to things. Throughout the time I've been lifting, I've consistently had better eating habits because I know my hard work will show off the healthier I eat. Prior to lifting I used to stay up until 3 a.m. some nights just because "I have nothing important the next day" and I would feel groggy the

next day and mess up my sleep schedule. Knowing I likely won't perform as well at the gym nor feel as good, I've rarely noticed myself going to bed past 1 a.m. including weekends.

Other students at Oyster River High School, like Oyster River boys basketball player Douglas MacGowan ('21), have experienced similarities with exercise. "What got me hooked on lifting was just seeing my body transform. I was super overweight back in middle school, so lifting and taking care of my health started to be a priority for me once I got into high school, and seeing my body change really was a huge confidence booster for me, and really is why I fell in love with it." Runner Rowan Brown shared a similar story to MacGowan. "I got hooked on lifting when I started taking it seriously and began noticing results from the workouts."

Students at ORHS have had common benefits with lifting. MacGowan shared his experience of lifting. "lifting and taking care of my health started to be a priority for me once I got into high school," said MacGowan. "Lifting has been a get away for me for years now...

Whenever I'm having a tough day, stressed because of school or work, going and getting a good lift always helps. Putting those feelings aside and just focusing on yourself and the weights is

seriously such a mood changer. For me, the gym is a great way to get anger out and straighten my thoughts when I'm stressed or in a bad mood."

Another Oyster River student had similar benefits to MacGowan from exercise, Maya Grainer ('24), shared how exercise has helped her. "Exercising has simply made me feel better emotionally and physically. There is just something about breaking out a good sweat and feeling refreshed that makes me feel better throughout the day." Grainger continued to say, "it builds character, which helps me out in everyday life. It holds me accountable to making my health the best it can be."

Oyster River teacher Mr. Morin has been working with students his entire life to improve their health and promote exercise. Morin talked about the chemicals released when lifting. "I can't imagine that anyone would not think that exercise, especially during this COVID pandemic, would benefit students. There are many reasons why, but some of the most obvious include the variety of chemicals that are released as a result of the

physical stress placed on the body. Epinephrine, dopamine and serotonin are a few that work together to help you feel good as well help to regulate mood." Morin went on to talk about another reason why it's so beneficial. "Another [reason exercise is beneficial] is the satisfaction that comes directly from the accomplishment of improvement...accomplishment is a great motivator." Seeing his students get healthier and reach their goals is one of the reasons why Morin loves his job.

Track coach and Nutrition teacher Mr. Ricciardi talked about some of the physical benefits of exercise. "Exercise has many benefits both physically and mentally...Specific types of workouts that raise heart rate help with cardiovascular health as well as muscle and bone health."

With limited in-school hours, and less students attending in school, social interaction has been less frequent. The gym is a great place to go with a friend because it's motivating and fun. Going with a friend can push each other harder to put in more effort. Friendly competitions can be extremely beneficial because

it practices goal setting and working as hard as you can. Although going to the gym with friends is fun and motivating, keeping everyone safe during these times come first. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, gyms all around the area have made changes to provide a

safe area to workout during these times. If you're going to go to a public gym, it's necessary to follow the guidelines to keep everyone around you, and yourself safe. All equipment, including the weights, should be wiped down with an anti-bacterial wipe, and masks should be worn when walking through the gym, if not at all times.

"I very much think exercise is important for everyone, especially students during covid. It is an aspect of life that we can control. It gives a sense of purpose, pride, and consistency in a world that seems to be changing so quick," said Ricciardi. Although it seems like the pandemic is winding down with more and more vaccines being distributed, that doesn't mean the benefits of exercise for you will not decrease.

- Foch Lovejoy 

Images from Rowan Brown & Douglas MacGowan



A Life In Football: Akan Ekanem

"Soccer for me, it's life. It's how I used to communicate when I didn't know the language. I've been on two semi pro teams where I don't speak the same language as anyone on my team. If you think about it from that perspective it's that universal conduit that you can connect with people," said Aken Ekanem, the ORHS boy's varsity soccer coach.

Soccer has been a part of Ekanem's life for as long as he can remember. The experiences of growing up in Africa, playing D1 college soccer and for semi-pro teams, have made Ekanem an asset to the various coaching jobs he has had throughout his life. Now at ORHS he has used his vast experience and knowledge of the sport to not only win the DII State Championship, but also to be a very influential coach and friend for all players in the program.

Ekanem was born in Ethiopia, and ended up moving around a lot as a kid because both his parents worked for the United Nations. His family of 6 moved to many countries but the primary two he said were Ethiopia and Kenya. "I got used to the whole concept of moving around and making new friends. In hindsight, it was a bit rough. I think my personality, being outgoing helped. I wasn't shy about walking up to random people, so it was okay for me and I just had fun with it really and made it work," said Ekanem.

As a kid, Ekanem had always had a deep connection with the sport of soccer. Soccer was a way that Ekanem was able to connect with new communities that he was constantly moving to. "Soccer's always been there. It's been 100% constant. Whenever we would move around, it was the way I would plug in with the new kids. I didn't need to know the language, didn't need to understand, just play," he said. Whether it be in the streets, his backyard, or organized soccer, he was always playing.

When he was going into high school, his family moved to Kenya. There, he attended a British boarding school, which he jokingly relates to Hogwarts from Harry Potter. While there he joined many different sports teams and had a pretty strict schedule. Instead of only having one sport per season, he would have multiple sports year round. Ekanem juggled, playing rugby, soccer, tennis and basketball all at the same time.

Despite being a multi-sport athlete, soccer was the most important for Ekanem. "We would come out of class for a 30 minute

break, and in the class prior to that we would be passing notes picking teams, and as soon as the bell goes we are playing. Then we would go back to class, and for lunch we would eat as quickly as possible and then go out and play again. After school it was the same thing," he said.

It was during this time in high school that he really began to embrace soccer. Having two Nigerian parents, he was a big fan of the Nigerian national team. He explained how when things really flipped for him were when Nigeria won the gold medal at the '96 Olympics. They had to beat the best teams in the world, and it wasn't really meant to happen. "The excitement around that really solidified and that's when I started concentrating not so much into the play and my favorite players, but also on what the coaches

were doing. I was trying to understand the concepts of the game. So, that is where my passion for coaching started," he said.

Coming out of a boarding school, Ekanem knew he wanted to go to college in the United States. His older brother was already living there, and his older sister was attending Creighton University in Nebraska. Since his parents were the ones paying for college, they decided that Creighton was where he would attend as well.

Luckily for him, they had a Division 1

soccer team. "I realized they had a soccer team, which was great. I walked on but didn't get much playing time. The team went to the D1 finals and it was extremely competitive, so getting playing time was impossible," he said.

There he studied Computer Science and African Studies. Playing Division 1 soccer can be very rigorous with a very strict schedule, but coming from a boarding school, this wasn't a big adjustment for Ekanem.

Coming out of college, Ekanem couldn't find a job due to the first dot com bust (a bubble in the stock market surrounding internet companies) and companies wanting a minimum of two years experience. Despite having the opportunity to be a practice player on the Los Angeles Galaxy (a Major League Soccer team) he instead decided to attend graduate school at North Carolina Central University for information sciences. Along with this, his mom found him a job working for a neighbor who needed a software technician. "Within the same month of me applying for grad school, I got a job in software for Formscape. Next thing I know,



I am flying all over the world installing and supporting software,” he explained.

Along with attending graduate school and working at a software company, he also began playing soccer for a semi pro team called the Rhinos, in North Carolina. He would practice three times a week, and play on the weekends, and sometimes missed practices due to work travels. When asked how it was handling everything he said, “It was great. I had the energy. I was excited and always loved doing it. Remember, I was playing a game I



loved. I didn’t have homework anymore, and I had the energy and it was a blast, and I absolutely loved it.” Sadly while playing for them, he tore both his ACL and MCL, which set him out for seven months. After returning to play, he joined another semi pro team in a Mexican League around age 24.

During this time he began coaching as well. “The school I went to grad school at didn’t have a soccer team, so I started a club team and was coaching and playing for it.” The rest of his family moved over to North Carolina when his parents retired, giving him the opportunity to coach his younger brother. “Then I started assistant coaching my little brother’s high school team at Durham Academy in North Carolina,” he said.

When he was 26, he stopped playing at the semi pro level, because work was getting serious. This didn’t stop him from playing altogether. He moved up to New Hampshire in 2007, and he would still play daily at Seacoast United. “When I figured out about Seacoast United in Epping, I was there every single day. I would finish work at 5, go home have dinner, then go to Hampton from 7 to 11 and play,” he said.

He began coaching for the Portsmouth Soccer Club (the Oyster River Youth Association (ORYA) equivalent for Portsmouth), until he moved to Newmarket. There he began hanging out with people from Durham, Lee, and Madbury, and began coaching for Maximum Velocity FC (MV). “Because MV had so many guys from Oyster River, we figured why not help out ORYA,” he explained. He then coached at ORYA for a little bit, coaching a U15 team to a state championship win.

He had previously spent time around the ORHS team in 2015, and coached some of the players on MV. This 2015 team ended up winning the Division II State Championship. Ekanem recalls that this put the idea that it would be nice to win a championship of his own in his head.

He stopped coaching for MV and began coaching for different clubs such as Granite State FC and GPS in Bedford. Fast forward one year in 2018 his high school coaching career started when he

was hired to be the varsity coach at ORHS. “Coaching at ORHS, I’m loving it because having the time to mold a team into what I want it to be is awesome. It’s got its challenges, but it’s fun, and it’s constantly brand new because every year you have a new team, which is fun for me,” he said

Many of the ORHS players were very excited to have him as the new head coach. A lot of this year’s seniors and juniors had him as a coach when he first started out at ORYA, and really loved him as a coach. “When I heard Akan was going to be the new varsity coach coming into my freshman year, I was very excited. Akan is no stranger to the ORYA community, coaching the club soccer team in our youth days,” said Nathan Mendoza (’22). He continued, “I think he just inspired more kids to play and try out since everyone knows and loves him as a coach. Since he’s come we have seen amazing results, obviously with our recent championship win. I think he just brings with him a presence as a coach that attracts people to the sport within the high school.”

This past season, Ekanem led the ORHS Varsity Soccer team to win the Division II State Championship. This only came after two years of defeat in the playoffs. In his first season in 2018, the team lost against Bow in the quarterfinals of playoffs, which Ekanem says was due to mistakes with his coaching tactics. In the 2019 season the team lost to Lebanon in the semifinals of playoffs. “Lebanon put the stick to us, and they were a better team at the end of the day, as a team as a whole I still think we should have beat them,” he said.

Going into the 2020 season, he put all lessons learned from the previous seasons and was able to win the state championship. “It was like, finally. It was confirmation of doing some things right here and that we can be successful. Don’t get me wrong the championship means a ton from that perspective, but in the grand scheme of things it means more to me to have a team that is playing together well,” he said.

Ekanem prioritizes the team over winning, and that really shows in his coaching style. His key ideas are serious fun, playing both fast and simple, and taking responsibility for yourself and



your actions. “I would say I’m flexible sometimes. Some coaches have a set in stone plan of what they’re doing, but I’ve got more of an adaptive mentality. I do have some hard core ideas on how we play, like play the ball fast, play the ball simple, and don’t over-complicate things, but it’s mapping out who passes to who, it’s more the style is fast and simple and go have fun,” he said.

While implementing his key ideas he is a very motivating and agreeable person to work with. According to Jim Thibault, the

ORHS boys JV soccer coach, “He has high energy, is easy to get along with but absolutely not someone you can walk over. He’s got a balance, where he’s in charge but he definitely cares about you as a person (coach to coach and coach to player), and that’s motivating.”

Ekanem has a very flexible coaching style that shifts with the different players he has on a given team. Many players have been able to improve their play because of this coaching style “Akan is a very strategic coach. Some coaches may be very offensively driven or defensively driven, but I believe Akan is more of a coach who coaches based off of what his team needs. He will switch it up sometimes to be more offensive than defensive and vice versa. He coaches based off of his player’s strengths and weaknesses,” said Mendoza.

He bases some of these ideas off of his previous coach’s styles, along with Alex Ferguson, the coach for Manchester United. He explained how the “disciplined fun” part of his coaching style came from his high school coach Alfred Weddie, who he relates to Bill Belichick, the head coach of the New England Patriots. Along with Weddie another person he models his coaching after is his college coach for his freshman year, coach Sharp. He explains how Sharp enforced responsibility and the idea that everything on and off the field can be solely controlled by you. He believes you shouldn’t

mentality with the Oyster River community. “You can see him at reserve games, junior varsity games, just supporting the players but also coaching. He roots everyone on and gets the varsity players involved with the younger grade levels; U8’s U9’s, trying to get a full community Oyster River soccer program,” said Kelley.

As the JV coach Thibault has seen Ekanem working with the younger players first hand and thinks he does an amazing job of working with them as well as the varsity team. “He’s present but not in a way that I think the kids feel nervous when he’s there. For the freshmen and sophomores when he does come to practice, they want to perform for him but they’re not afraid of him. He’s there often enough that he really does know the kid’s names and pays attention to individual player’s improvements. He’s actively watching and taking notes and giving feedback,” said Thibault.

Although coaching has been a major part of his life, playing was a major part as well until around two years ago when he stopped playing. “I slowly wound down my playing altogether. Even in 2007 I would play 3-4 hours a day, and then slowed down for 2 reasons: because my son came along, and played less to spend more time with my family, and because my body was beat,” he said.

He plans to begin playing a little bit this year, and at some



blame anyone else to explain why something happened the way it did.

Along with this he always stresses the importance of working together as a unit and understanding how each person fits into that unit. “I would rather lose and have a team that is playing amazing as a team, and I know that sounds insane, but a key part of a soccer team is the team. Ideally, a team that has that concept at their root is going to be successful, but the winning part is not everything, the winning part is a result of a well put together team,” he said. He relates this to Argentina’s national team. They have always had an incredible strike force, and hypothetically they should win every cup, but they don’t play as a team.

This team mentality is something that many of his players appreciate. “He definitely isn’t a coach that believes he knows it all, and he’ll trust his players and assistant coaches to make decisions as well, and I feel that definitely makes him a great coach,” said captain Aidan Kelley (‘21).

Not only does Ekanem prioritize having a cohesive team that works well together, he has made huge efforts to have this same

point later on, to retire from working and fully focus on coaching. Ekanem said, “Well I’ll die coaching somewhere. I’m always gonna coach. I plan on playing a little bit this year, and hopefully the program continues to grow and get better, and then at some point when I’m done working, I’ll fully focus on coaching.”

Ekanem has largely made an impact on many players lives both on and off the field and has been a mentor for many. Mendoza said, “I think of Akan as a friend. Yes, he’s my coach. He’s been my coach for years, but off the field when he’s not coaching, he’s a friend and a mentor. He’s always teaching me the good and the bad in this world. He’s always there to cheer me up, talk with me about anything, and he’s always there to help me with anything. I think off the field he just does what he can to make people happy and to teach people how to be a better person.”

-Ethan Wilson 

Photos by Josie Chinburg

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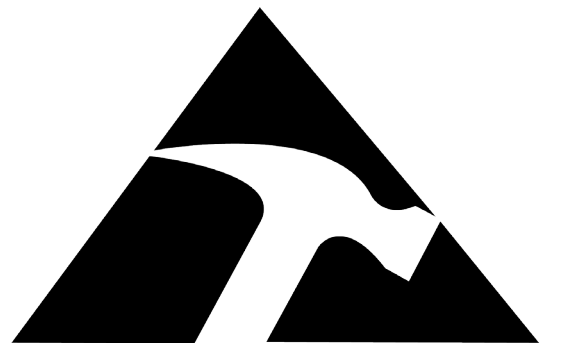
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